

**DISASTER AND INTERVENTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:  
LEARNING FROM RWANDA**

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September 9, 1994

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The author would like to thank Ambassador Marc Baas, Dr. Thomas-Durell Young, and, especially, LTC James Kievit for many comments and ideas vital to this study.

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## FOREWORD

Rwanda's horrific civil war suggests that human disasters requiring outside intervention will remain common in Sub-Saharan Africa. The American people want a prompt and effective response to human disasters when the United States becomes involved. The Army is taking steps to enhance its demonstrated effectiveness at such operations.

In this study, Steven Metz examines the policy and strategy implications of violence-induced human disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa with special emphasis on Rwanda. The author argues that our senior military leaders, policymakers and strategists must better understand the African security environment. He also warns that to avoid overtaxing the military, U.S. objectives in African disaster relief must be limited. This combination of limited policy goals and operational efficiency will allow the U.S. military to serve public demands at a minimal cost to its other efforts.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this study as part of the ongoing effort to improve American capabilities in the complex array of operations other than war we face in the post-Cold War security environment.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

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## **SUMMARY**

Human disasters born of armed conflict will continue to plague Sub-Saharan Africa. When the American people demand engagement, the U.S. military, especially the Army/Air Force team, responds effectively and efficiently when local order has collapsed or when local authorities resist relief efforts. The better that Army planners and leaders understand the nature of African conflict and the better they've prepared before such conflicts occur, the greater the likelihood the Army can fulfill the public's expectations at minimum cost to other efforts.

### **Why Rwanda Happened.**

Human disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa are characterized by widespread famine and disease, and often by large refugee movements which overwhelm precarious systems of public health and provision. They are almost always the direct or indirect result of organized violence combined with economic stagnation and disintegration, population pressure, ecological decay, and regional conflict. Some are deliberately engineered by a regime or local authorities to punish opponents, derail a separatist movement, or undercut support for an insurgency. Others are accidental, occurring when authority collapses. Because of its combination of a history of primal violence, intra-elite struggle, a weak economy, proximity to conflict-ridden neighbors, and a lack of outside interest, Rwanda was especially vulnerable to human disaster. In many ways, the crisis of 1994 was the inevitable result of 50 years of misrule, repression, and violence.

### **Strategic Concepts.**

When the United States joins a disaster relief operation in Sub-Saharan Africa, our objectives must be limited. The U.S. military's long-term objective should be only to establish or reestablish civilian control that meets minimum standards of human rights. The limits of our interests and the extent of our global commitments simply will not allow sustained, expensive engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa. The key to increasing efficiency and effectiveness in disaster intervention is establishing and refining concepts and procedures. At the highest level, the United States must make a number of key strategic decisions before engaging in disaster intervention:

- When to intervene;
- Force mix and authority relationships; and,
- Exit strategy.

The specific contribution of the Army will depend, in part, on whether a disaster is controlled or uncontrolled.

## **Conclusions.**

The disaster in Rwanda supports several long-standing ideas important to American policymakers and strategists:

- Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa is multidimensional;
- In African politics, personalities are vital;
- In areas of limited direct or tangible national interests, the United States is unlikely to preempt a conflict or intervene to stop a war;
- The United States needs to help develop better multinational mechanisms to respond to African disaster before crises happen;
- For the U.S. military, there is no substitute for experience at disaster relief in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- The Army/Air Force team will bear the brunt of future disaster relief efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- While EUCOM will bear the major responsibility for planning African disaster relief, the Army and Air Force staffs should be more directly involved;
- Disaster relief strains Army Active Component combat support and combat service support resources;
- Disaster relief should not be considered a primary Army mission.

Army commanders might consider humanitarian relief in Sub-Saharan Africa a distraction from their principal warfighting mission, but they will probably be called on to perform these kinds of operations in the future.

## **DISASTER AND INTERVENTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: LEARNING FROM RWANDA**

### **Introduction.**

By now, Americans might appear numb to African violence and the suffering of innocents that always follows, but the horror of Rwanda was so extensive, so intense that it moved all but the coldest observer. The timing of the crisis was particularly troubling. Coming immediately on the heels of a war-induced disaster in Somalia, Rwanda suggests a pattern or trend, hinting ominously that similar crises might occur elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa and again require a U.S. or multinational response. As we attempt to ease the suffering of Rwandans, then, we must also seek the wider strategic implications of their experience. Perhaps from their pain we can draw the insight to mitigate future disasters.

Several things are already clear. The American response to this new breed of African disasters must break with the frequent clumsiness of our past policy and be based on an understanding of their peculiar historic, economic, social, and political context. And, any assessment of the proper U.S. response must be placed within the wider framework of our emerging post-Cold War national security strategy. What we do in Africa will affect our image, credibility, and moral standing around the world. It will also help shape public attitudes toward the appropriate extent of American involvement in the Third World. The glare of global attention has made Rwanda an important if unintended component of evolving U.S. policy in the Third World, a test case of sorts. If the United States cannot find a way to respond effectively and efficiently to African disasters, the hand of isolationists will be strengthened. We can rebound from one Somalia, but probably not from two. Much, then, is at stake—the symbolic importance of Rwanda with its wider strategic implications may outweigh its immediate significance. By looking closely at Rwanda, the United States, particularly the U.S. military, can begin to develop the means and the wisdom to make maximum use of our scarce resources when the next African disaster explodes.

### **Why Rwanda Happened.**

Human disasters are characterized by widespread famine, disease, and, often, by large refugee movements which overwhelm precarious systems of public health and food distribution. They are almost always the direct or indirect result of organized violence, usually primal conflict (based on ethnicity, tribalism, religion, clan, caste, clique, or race) and the absence of nonviolent means for ameliorating it. Combined with economic stagnation and disintegration, population pressure, ecological decay, and regional conflict, these factors form the foundation of human disaster. It then takes only a spark to begin the crisis.

From the perspective of U.S. policy and strategy, one of the most important elements of a human disaster is the extent to which it is *controlled*. Control can be thought of as a continuum. At one end are human disasters deliberately engineered by a regime or local authorities to punish opponents, derail a separatist movement, or undercut support for an insurgency. "Assaults on the food supply," as David Keen writes, "have become a key military strategy in Africa's civil wars."<sup>1</sup> This is not unique to Africa: Stalin and Mao used famine as a tool of internal security as did the U.S. Army in its campaigns against the Navaho and Apache. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the most controlled human disasters were probably Nigeria's war against Biafran separatists in the 1960s, the "pacification" campaign against Tigrean insurgents and Eritrean separatists by Mengistu's regime in Ethiopia, and Sudan's counterinsurgency campaign in the southern part of that country. At the other end of the continuum are disasters that are either accidental, occurring when authority collapses, or, like many wildfires in the American West, deliberately started but uncontrollable. Rwanda is an example of a disaster intentionally begun during a political struggle which quickly ran out of control.

Although most African states were artificial creations of European colonialism, Rwanda (like Burundi) was an established kingdom for several centuries before being absorbed by German East Africa in 1899.<sup>2</sup> Because of its geographic isolation, limited economic value and minimal strategic importance, the Germans and, after 1916, the Belgians, used "indirect rule" in Rwanda, leaving much administration to existing institutions and individuals (see Figure 1). This meant that the traditional domination of the Tutsi, which made up about 14 percent of the Rwandan people, over the Hutus—85 percent of the population—continued and was in some ways even reinforced, particularly when Tutsis served as overseers of Hutu forced laborers on colonial development projects. But even though traditional authority persisted at the local level, the Belgians modernized the national political, legal, and administrative systems. By changing the educational system to include Hutus, the Belgians also created a Hutu elite which would later lead that group's efforts to transcend its historic subordination.

The Tutsi-Hutu conflict was not a typical African struggle. Unlike, for instance, Angola where divisions were essentially tribal or Somalia where clans were the most important political units, the Tutsi-Hutu distinction was based on caste or class.<sup>3</sup> Both belong to the Banyarwanda tribe and speak Kinyarwanda. In the historic Kingdom of Rwanda, the royal family, nobles, army commanders, most chiefs, and people who kept cattle were Tutsis; some chiefs, soldiers, and people who grew crops were Hutus.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was possible to move from Tutsi to Hutu or the reverse as a family's economic situation declined or improved. Many Rwandan intellectuals blame Belgian colonial policy for transforming class distinctions into more intractable ethnic



ones.<sup>5</sup> "We were taught in school that the Tutsis, Hutus, and Twa

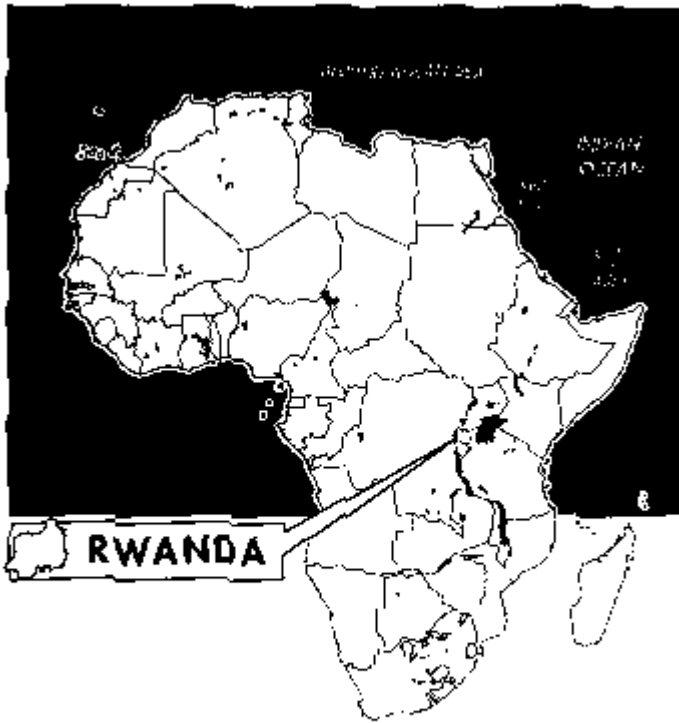


Figure 1.

were separate tribes," according to a refugee Tutsi, "but these were tribes that were invented in Europe."<sup>6</sup>

In 1959, Hutu discontent exploded in outright rebellion. The Belgians, who sympathized with the Hutus in part because they considered the Tutsi elite pro-communist, restored order, but increased the pace of democratization and decolonization.<sup>7</sup> This, of course, benefitted the more numerous Hutus at the expense of the Tutsis. Rwanda attained independence in July 1962 firmly under Hutu control. In the violence that followed, a number of attacks were launched by guerrilla bands of the Tutsi-dominated *Union Nationale Rwandaise* (UNAR). The response was repression and outright massacre of Tutsis. This led to a large migration with most refugees fleeing to neighboring Uganda and Zaire. By 1964, between 40 and 70 percent of Rwanda's Tutsis were refugees, but few abandoned hope of an eventual return to their homeland.<sup>8</sup>

With Tutsi opposition crushed, conflict erupted within the Hutu elite as northerners resisted what they perceived as unfair economic advantages given southerners by the government.<sup>9</sup> This intra-Hutu squabble exacerbated Hutu-Tutsi conflict as both groups attempted to portray the other as Tutsi-influenced. In 1973, regional events ignited violence as the massacre of Hutus

by the Tutsi-dominated army of Burundi sparked further massacres of Tutsis within Rwanda. During the ensuing disorder, Army Chief of Staff Juvénal Habyarimana seized control. Habyarimana was a charismatic young officer from a landowning family in northern Rwanda. Defense minister at the age of 28, he was powerful and bold.<sup>10</sup> He immediately instigated reforms, most importantly a degree of Hutu-Tutsi reconciliation. For the next fifteen years, Rwanda under Habyarimana was relatively calm and competently administered.

In 1989 a series of crises shattered this stability. A combination of soil degradation, population pressure, crop disease, and a precipitous decline in world prices for coffee—Rwanda's major source of export earnings—led to economic crisis.<sup>11</sup> Famine spread and required substantial outside relief. Coupled with seemingly endless government scandals, this destroyed Rwanda's precarious political balance. On October 1, 1990, a military force of between 7,000 and 10,000 representing the exiled, Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) entered from Uganda.<sup>12</sup> Although its senior leaders had not seen Rwanda since they were babies and most of the rank and file had never set foot there, they had long dreamed of a return to their homeland. Many had accumulated military experience and political support during the Ugandan conflict of the 1980s.<sup>13</sup> In fact, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni—himself a Tutsi from an earlier migration—had seized power in 1986 with the help of about 2,000 guerrillas recruited from the Tutsi refugees in his country.<sup>14</sup> Many held important leadership positions in his army.

While decades of resentment among the refugees formed the foundation of rebel support, the immediate precipitants of the invasion seemed to be stabilization of the situation inside Uganda (thus freeing many RPF forces from duties there), and, echoing the Bay of Pigs, the belief by RPF leaders that discontent with the Habyarimana regime would generate public support for the rebels once they entered Rwanda.<sup>15</sup> With the help of troops from Zaire, the Rwandan government was able to hold off the invasion and the course of battle quickly turned against the rebels. The RPF's charismatic leader, Fred Rwigyema, was killed by a sniper on the first day of the campaign.<sup>16</sup> After near-defeat, the RPF shifted to guerrilla operations from bases in the Virunga volcano chain. Under the direction of Major Paul Kagame—often described as a military genius—they soon controlled a strip of Rwandan territory along the Ugandan border. By late 1991, the military balance favored the rebels. Mediation efforts by the other states of the region failed to end the conflict so, to undercut support for the RPF, Habyarimana implemented further political reforms and shuffled government ministries. Despite a simultaneous crack down on opponents of the regime, the reforms gave Hutu hardliners the impression that Habyarimana was "soft" on the RPF. Among their responses was the formation of armed militias—a step that amplified the later violence.<sup>17</sup>

At the end of 1992 the RPF had "fought to a position of near

invincibility."<sup>18</sup> Further military successes by the rebels in 1993 (including the near-capture of Kigali, the capital) led to negotiations between the government and RPF. The outcome was the Arusha Accords which sought to end the war, demobilize both sides, move the nation toward multiparty democracy, and reintegrate the Tutsi refugees back into Rwandan life.<sup>19</sup> The Organization of African Unity (OAU) provided troops to monitor the cease-fire, a step which the Clinton administration hoped would be "a model for future OAU involvement in conflict resolution."<sup>20</sup> Despite the apparent promise, the accords were bitterly opposed by Hutu hardliners, and all the parties squabbled and maneuvered for political power in a transitional government.<sup>21</sup> Hatred was the stock-in-trade of these machinations. Hutu hardliners felt that the RPF had received concessions out of proportion to the 14 percent of the population that it represented, further fanning rumors that the Habyarimana government was Tutsi-influenced. Killing was encouraged by many political leaders while many military deserters turned to banditry, further strengthening the power of the armed militias.<sup>22</sup> This atmosphere of instability, violence, recrimination, paranoia, and accusation was to prove incendiary.

On April 6, 1994, a plane carrying Habyarimana and the president of Burundi crashed. Although the exact cause has not been determined, the aircraft was probably downed by a shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile fired from Kigali.<sup>23</sup> While Hutu dissidents opposed to Habyarimana's reform and reconciliation process seem to be the most likely culprits, proving guilt quickly became almost irrelevant. The assassination unleashed an immediate and apparently well-planned wave of killing led by government forces and Hutu militias.<sup>24</sup> Both Tutsis and moderate Hutus were victims. In reality, this was only an escalation of sporadic attacks on Tutsis begun after the 1990 invasion.<sup>25</sup> However much the instigation of the violence was deliberate and controlled, it quickly disintegrated into genocidal anarchy as semi-organized militias and even bands of neighbors killed with any available weapon.

A 2,500 member United Nations peacekeeping force was in Rwanda when the violence erupted, but, even if it had been asked to halt the killing, it was not authorized to use force. Without hope of quick outside intervention, the RPF launched an offensive to stop the massacres. Progress was slow, however, and by the third week of the crisis, estimates of the victims were in the hundreds of thousands. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asked for an additional 5,500 peacekeepers but the Security Council did not approve the new force until May 17. By then, aid officials in Rwanda estimated that half a million had died.<sup>26</sup> From around the world, promises of assistance were prompt; delivery was not. Delayed by a dispute over repayment, 50 armored personnel carriers from the United States were not sent until mid-July. When they did arrive, they were unpainted and without radios or machine guns, further delaying their use.<sup>27</sup> In June, a French military force established a safe zone in southwestern

Rwanda, but did not attempt to disarm the Hutu militias and allowed government forces free movement in the area (see Figure 2).<sup>28</sup> With a degree of confusion matching anything shown by the United States in Somalia, the French initially stated that they had drawn "a line in the sand" against advancing rebel forces and then backed off, called their mission a success, and asked for a U.N. force to relieve them.<sup>29</sup> Ignoring the French, the RPF seized Kigali and the last government strongholds, and established a government of national unity with a moderate Hutu as president.<sup>30</sup>

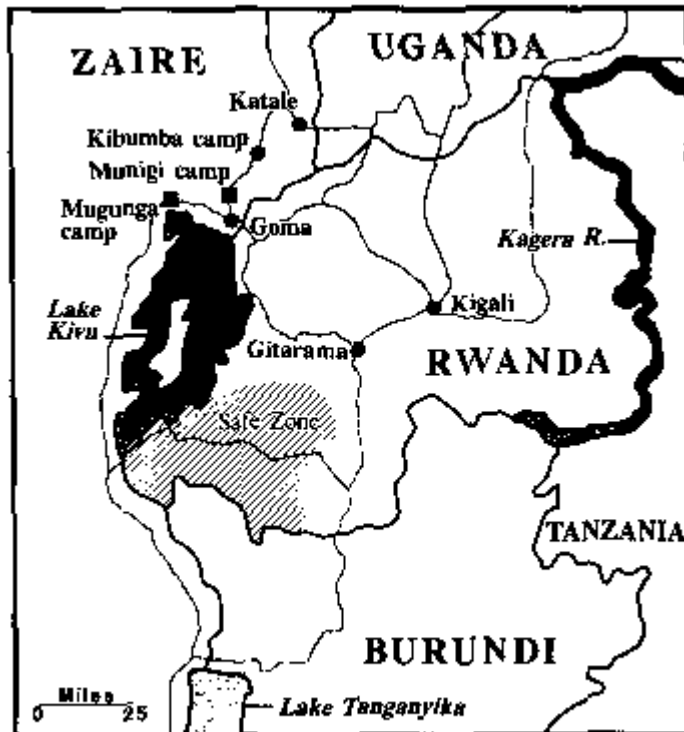


Figure 2.

For Rwanda, though, the end of the war did not stop the suffering. In one of the most rapid and largest exoduses in human history, more than a million Hutus, fearing Tutsi retribution for the killings of April, May, and June, fled to Tanzania and Zaire. Under appalling conditions in mass refugee camps, thousands died from cholera, dysentery, and exhaustion. In late July, an international relief effort including contingents of the U.S. military began to come to grips with the immediate crisis, but the long-term question of what to do with the refugees and how (or whether) to encourage them to return home remained.<sup>31</sup> While the RPF's human rights record did not reach the horrific depths of the Hutu militias', it planned to prosecute former government officials and militia leaders on charges of genocide and murder.<sup>32</sup> Facing what they saw as a choice between death by disease in the camps or death by Tutsi forces in Rwanda, most

refugees sat, waited, and sometimes died.

### **Strategic Considerations.**

Rwanda will not be the last disaster that requires U.S. military intervention. Many African states have the requisite combination of primal conflict, an absence of nonviolent means for ameliorating it, intense intra-elite political struggles, and fragile systems for public health and provision. Many are buffeted by economic stagnation and disintegration, political corruption, population pressure, ecological decay, and regional conflict. And, as the ability of the United States, the United Nations, and nongovernmental relief organizations to respond to human disasters improves and conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa worsen, life in refugee camps will become more attractive to the beleaguered people of Africa. It is one of the enduring ironies of life that demands rise in proportion to competence. The United States will soon find that the better we become at disaster relief, the more we will be asked to do.

Simply ignoring calls for help is neither ethical nor politically feasible. Although not all African disasters draw the attention of the American people, when they do, the public demands a quick and effective reaction. Only the U.S. military has the full range of resources, training, and experience to react rapidly to geographically isolated disasters when local order and authority collapse. This is especially true of specialized capabilities in logistics, transportation, and intelligence. Many nations can provide infantry, but none can match the wide and integrated capabilities of the United States. Whether due to politics or resource limitations, African states cannot confront large-scale crises without outside assistance. This means that the U.S. military, acting in conjunction with nongovernmental relief organizations, international organizations like the United Nations, and other states, will probably become involved in future African disasters. We must, therefore, push our competence one step ahead of rising demands.

When the United States joins a disaster relief operation in Sub-Saharan Africa, our objectives must be limited. "U.S. strategic interests in Africa," according to Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles W. Freeman, Jr., "are very modest."<sup>33</sup> Our concerns are primarily moral and symbolic. That does not automatically make them less relevant, but does help define the parameters of strategic feasibility. The limits of our interests must shape our goals: when we do become involved, the immediate objective should be to ameliorate catastrophe and meet basic human needs. The U.S. military's long-term objective should be to establish or reestablish civilian control that meets minimum standards of human rights. This control may be by national authorities or an international organization. Critics who argue that such an approach leaves the root causes of disaster unchanged and that the ultimate solution is establishing viable

democracies and stable economies are correct but misguided. The limits of our interests and the extent of our global commitments simply will not allow sustained, expensive engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa. Memories of Somalia are still fresh. We will often *support* long-term solutions, but seldom if ever assume sole responsibility. Commenting on Rwanda, Secretary of Defense Perry said, "We're there for emergency humanitarian aid, and as soon as the operation is up and running, we want to get out and turn things over to the relief agencies."<sup>34</sup>

Increasing efficiency and effectiveness requires sound thinking. A number of key strategic decisions must be made before engaging in disaster intervention:

*When to Intervene.* No decision is harder yet more central to ultimate success than the timing of an intervention. Many analysts take a "sooner is better" approach. To limit suffering, they argue, we should preempt disasters. If that is impossible, we should intervene as early as possible.<sup>35</sup> President Clinton, for instance, stated, "We should help the nations of Africa identify and solve problems before they erupt."<sup>36</sup> According to J. Brian Atwood, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, a mission he undertook to East Africa in 1994 to organize international efforts to prevent a drought from triggering famine probably saved more lives than his parallel exertions in Rwanda.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Pentagon relief coordinator Patricia L. Irvin said, "The most important thing for all of us is to get better at creating an early-warning system, not just for famines but man-made regional conflicts. We have to be able to respond to them before they become so critical."<sup>38</sup>

However rational this "early is better" position, it underestimates the severe constraints faced by U.S. strategists and policymakers. We did not, after all, delay our involvement in Rwanda because of amorality or stupidity. In the absence of a clear, unmitigated disaster, it is often impossible to generate a consensus among the American public and Congress for anything more expensive than diplomatic action. However much they were moved by the suffering in Rwanda, few Americans would have supported sacrificing U.S. troops to stop it when many Rwandans seemed to want it to continue. Furthermore, the notion of a conflict being "ripe for resolution" is relevant when contemplating intervention.<sup>39</sup> As morally painful as it may be, there are conflicts where hate must be exhausted before resolution can begin. Just as the horrors of World War II made the problems of Western Europe ripe for resolution, the bloodbath in Rwanda may set the stage for an ultimate solution to that nation's conflict. If the United States or a multinational force had stopped the war before the RPF victory, a stockpile of hate may have remained and festered, only to explode again in the near future.

U.S. policy will generally be clear when a disaster falls at either end of the controlled/uncontrolled continuum. At the

controlled end, we should pressure the regime engineering the disaster either directly or by mobilizing international support. If the regime changes its policy, the United States should support multinational relief efforts. When a regime does not respond, the United States might attempt to put together a coalition for coercive intervention and relief and even contribute military support forces and airpower, but will not, in peripheral areas, take such actions alone. For clearly uncontrolled disasters, relief must come first and political efforts to hand over control to civilian authorities second. The greatest problem, though, will come from disasters falling between the controlled and uncontrolled ends of the continuum. As always in strategy, the "gray areas" are the most complex. When they occur, we must decide on a case-by-case basis whether political pressure or relief should take priority. But American policymakers and strategists must realize that the decision to intervene is not made in a strategic vacuum. Intervention in Somalia must be understood within the wider framework of attempts to construct a "new world order"; the decision to intervene in Rwanda may be related to our frustrations with Haiti. Similarly, in a perfect world, transitory public opinion should not determine policy. That may hold in areas where we have clear and tangible national interests, but in peripheral regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, public opinion often will be a primary determinant of policy. Astute policymakers and strategists will accept this.

*Force Mix and Authority Relationships.* Because time is so precious when responding to disasters, the proper chain of authority will probably only be clarified as an operation progresses. It would be both immoral and politically damaging to argue over authority relationships while innocents died. Force mixture requires somewhat greater attention. The more underdeveloped the infrastructure and the more unstable the region where a disaster occurs, the greater the role of the U.S. military. This is especially true when there is a threat of violence against the relief efforts. As a general rule of thumb, civilian agencies should bear the absolute maximum degree of responsibility possible. This will minimize the diversion of military resources from other tasks and reflects the fact that civilian agencies are better suited to the sorts of sustained efforts required to bring a disaster-ridden area to some semblance of normalcy. Within the U.S. military, combat forces in particular should be at the lowest possible level. Combat forces would play a major role during coercive intervention to forcibly stop a controlled disaster and a fairly important role in establishing security in volatile situations, but when there is little threat of violence, only combat support and combat service support forces would be involved.

*Exit Strategy.* All coherent military planning depends on a clear notion of the desired end state or outcome. This certainly holds for military involvement in human disasters. Most often, success will be defined as bringing the disaster under control



and turning responsibility for relief operations over to civilians, either multinational or national. Defining indicators of unresolvability is more difficult. Once military forces are in place, there is a tendency toward "mission creep." In all disasters, a multitude of tasks, some directly connected with relief operations and others subsidiary, need to be done. The U.S. military's desire for effectiveness and efficiency lead it to assume these tasks rather than leave them undone or in what is perceived as less efficient hands. Establishing security is especially tempting. Disasters are, by definition, disorderly. Armed men abound, whether military forces, members of militias, or simple gangsters. In fact, the three categories often overlap in Sub-Saharan Africa. But when security degenerates, the operation becomes *peace enforcement* rather than *disaster relief*. At that point, the rules change. In peripheral areas like Sub-Saharan Africa, then, it is vital for the U.S. military to avoid mission creep and for American policymakers to be able to admit unresolvability and resist any urge to assume full responsibility for peace enforcement. We should not rigidly eschew all involvement in peace enforcement in areas where our national interests are minimal, but should allow the United Nations or Organization of Africa Unity to lead and limit our contribution to airpower, transportation, logistical support, and intelligence. Finally, delineating specific procedures for the hand-off of responsibility for relief activities to civilians is a vital strategic decision that must be made early in an operation.

*The Army Contribution.* If national policymakers decide to attempt to preempt a potential disaster in Africa, the Army can play a vital role. Intelligence experts and Foreign Area Officers could help identify states susceptible to disaster and analyze the causes of the problem. Psychological operations forces could help ease tensions and increase the legitimacy of the government. Engineers could support nation assistance and infrastructure development which also increase government legitimacy and economic development, thus eroding some of the conditions that contribute to conflict and disaster. And, when a conflict with the potential to spawn disaster seems imminent, the Army could, if national leaders decide to pursue peace operations, provide combat forces.

Once a disaster occurs, the specific role of the U.S. Army will vary according to the extent the disaster is controlled (see Figure 3). For a controlled disaster like southern Sudan, the primary American effort must be mobilizing multinational political and economic pressure to force the government to allow relief. If the world community and the U.S. National Command Authorities decide to forcibly end a controlled disaster, Army combat forces, particularly light infantry and Special Forces, would play an important role. These can be called the "change policy" element of an Army force package. The "restore order" element of an Army force package would include military police, civil affairs, and psychological operations forces. These units

would help establish a suitable degree of civic order for

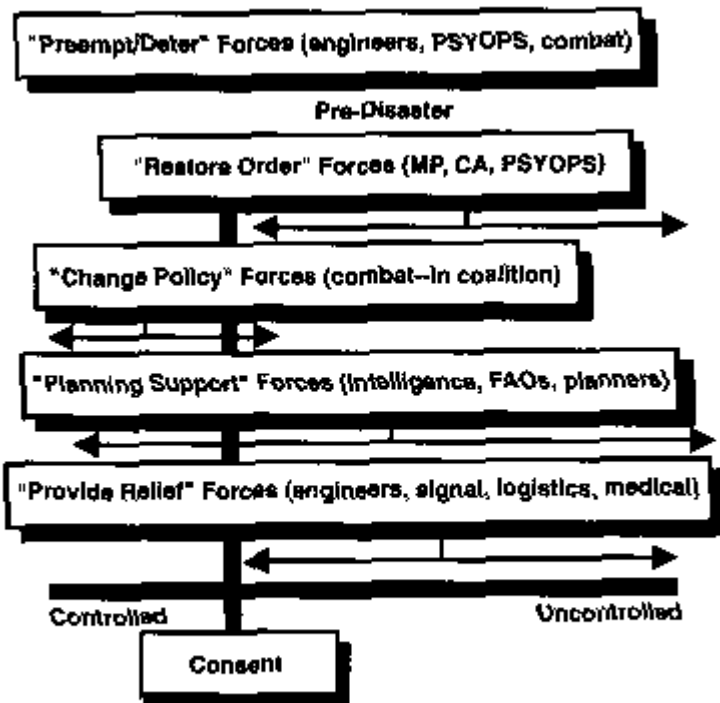


Figure 3.

hand-off to civilian authorities. In a controlled disaster, their job would only begin once local authorities consent to the relief operation, whether willingly or unwillingly. This also holds for what can be called the "provide relief" element of an Army force package such as engineers, logistics, medical, and signal units. Their primary task would be the actual distribution of relief supplies. Finally, the "planning support" element of an Army force package would play a vital role whether a disaster was controlled or uncontrolled by providing intelligence, political, social, and economic information, and planning expertise.

### Conclusions.

Care must be taken in extrapolating lessons from Rwanda. With the exception of neighboring Burundi, few other states in Africa have precisely the same combination of caste conflict, overpopulation, refugee flows, and regional intrigue. Still, the disaster in Rwanda does offer evidence to support long-standing ideas or conclusions, all of which are important to American policymakers and strategists.

*Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa is multidimensional.* When Americans attempt to understand African conflicts, they often overemphasize the primal dimension. Tribes, castes, clans, and

cliques are important, but are not the sole determinant of conflict and often not even the most important one. In African conflicts primalism often begins as a secondary consideration and only increases in importance when it is manipulated. Since this also happened in the American South during the 1950s and 1960s when some politicians fanned racial hatred to propel their careers, Americans should understand it. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the tendency to manipulate group differences for personal gain is even more pronounced precisely because the stakes of politics are so high. The winners of political competition not only have the right to govern, but also control the economy and the distribution of jobs, contracts and other resources. To lose a political struggle is often to lose all. This makes political competitors willing to stoop to any level, even the manipulation of tribal distrust, to win the game.

Regional elements are equally important. African disasters are shaped, perhaps even caused, by what goes on outside the nation. Conflict in neighboring states, for instance, often creates refugees. With political boundaries bearing little resemblance to ethnic or tribal divisions, and violence endemic, refugees have become a permanent fact of life for many African states. No conflict is strictly internal. Events in Rwanda were shaped when bloodshed and repression in Burundi and Uganda led to new refugee flows and altered the status of existing refugee communities. Furthermore, conflicts in neighboring states sometimes create antagonisms that generate external support for insurgents or rebels.<sup>40</sup> Two decades of war in Uganda provided valuable military experience to the senior leadership of the RPF. It also created a political debt which helped the RPF during its struggle. While Museveni denied supporting the RPF's invasion of Rwanda, it is unlikely that he was unaware of the training and preparation that preceded it. The massacre of Hutus in Burundi as recently as 1993 generated refugees who brought word of Tutsi repression, thus flaming hostility and fear in Rwanda. And even events in Somalia probably affected Rwanda by leading Hutu hardliners to conclude that there would be no effective international response to their massacre of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Primal schisms, then, shape conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, but do not cause them. It is a *combination* of high-stakes political machinations, economic stagnation, population pressure, ecological decay, refugees, the absence of peaceful means for conflict resolution, and primal violence that spawns human disasters.

*In African politics, personalities are vital.* Americans, accustomed to thinking in terms of organizations, institutions, forces, parties, and movements, sometimes overlook the importance of personalities in Sub-Saharan Africa. African politics, according to Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "are most often a personal or factional struggle to control the national government or to influence it: a struggle that is restrained by private and tacit agreements, prudential concerns, and personal ties and dependencies rather than public rules and

institutions."<sup>41</sup> Juvénal Habyarimana was powerful enough to build and sustain a very fragile truce between the various conflicting forces tearing at his nation, at least partially regulating the hatred, distrust, manipulation, and paranoia that formed the currency of Rwandan politics. Eventually, his ability to control Hutu hardliners while attempting a Tutsi-Hutu rapprochement and economic structural reform might have borne fruit, but his death doomed Rwanda to violence. By the same token, the personalities of the new regime will play a major role in determining whether Rwanda's future holds reconciliation or simply spasmodic episodes of disaster. American policymakers must therefore frame their approach to Rwanda in terms of key personalities rather than using oversimplified notions of tribal conflict.

*In areas of limited direct or tangible national interests, the United States is unlikely to intervene to stop a war.* Rwanda suggests that the United States will stop natural disaster but not halt armed conflict. There is no public consensus in the United States supporting military intervention in an ongoing war. The American public can tolerate death by violence in peripheral areas (or, at least, considers the costs of stopping it too great). We have grown accustomed to human evil. But the public cannot tolerate suffering from natural and, presumably, preventable causes. Likewise, preemption is difficult in peripheral areas like Sub-Saharan Africa. Successful preemption of complex conflicts requires astute, sustained, and often expensive engagement. As with deterrence, the preemptor can never gain full satisfaction since it cannot be conclusively known whether the preemption prevented an escalation of the conflict or whether it would have subsided naturally. In areas of intense national interest, the United States might pursue preemption in spite of this uncertainty. In peripheral areas, we will not. We must also be aware of the political complexities of preemption. Since it will often entail augmenting stability by supporting a regime, the United States will be seen as taking sides in the conflict. This could lead to attempts by disgruntled parties to target Americans, perhaps by terrorism within the United States. It is a lamentable but clear fact that disaster relief seldom creates hostility or antagonisms, while early involvement or attempted preemption does. Given the pitfalls of preemption, we are probably doomed to react to African disasters rather than prevent them.

*The United States needs to help develop better multinational mechanisms to respond <T>to African disaster before crises happen.* Because we have limited tangible or direct national interests in Sub-Saharan Africa, we must respond as efficiently as possible. There are two ways to do that: first, preempt crises or intervene early; and, second, organize (and perhaps lead) a multinational and multi-agency response once a disaster does occur. Both of these would be aided by a concerted American effort to develop the ability of multinational organizations like the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations to preempt and respond to disasters with limited U.S. assistance.<sup>42</sup>

Empowering other agencies could lead to a strategic level division of labor freeing the United States for other tasks. The more the OAU and UN can do, the less we will have to do. Similarly, the United States should lead an initiative to coordinate NATO responses to African disasters, including pre-disaster training, crisis identification, and planning.

*For the U.S. military, there is no substitute for experience at disaster relief in Sub-Saharan Africa.* The U.S. military is getting better, but much remains to be done. Stepped-up training and exercising of noncombat joint task forces configured for humanitarian relief could speed up the learning process and thus should be pursued, even at some cost to combat training. None of the U.S. military services should consider humanitarian relief a primary mission. As Defense Secretary William J. Perry put it, "We're an army, not a Salvation Army."<sup>43</sup> Disaster relief will, however, remain an important secondary function for the U.S. military. The goal should be to provide the appropriate amount of time and money to training and planning for these sorts of operations--neither too much nor too little.

*The Army/Air Force team will bear the brunt of future disaster relief efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa.* The Marines have done a superb job at disaster relief in Somalia, Bangladesh, and elsewhere, but in future African disasters, the Army will probably play the central role. The Marines are currently even harder pressed to maintain warfighting proficiency and other commitments than the Army. In addition, the Army has some resources the Marines lack, particularly for sustained inland operations. And as we pay greater heed to the perceptual component of relief operations, Army psychological operations forces will be essential. The "first team" for most African disaster relief operations, then, will combine the Air Force's strategic and intra-theater airlift capabilities with the Army's ground resources. Disaster relief in Africa will be multi-service, but not joint in the full sense of the term. Planning and implementation of African disaster relief will, of course, be the primary responsibility of EUCOM, but the fact that such operations are multi-service rather than joint should lead to an increased role for the Army and Air Force staffs in prediction, preemption, and response.

*Disaster relief strains Army Active Component combat support and combat service support resources.* For the Army, the likelihood of future engagement in wide-scale disaster relief requires a serious, zero-based rethinking of some key force structure issues. Active Component combat support and combat service support forces are very limited. In wartime, the Reserve Component makes up this shortfall. In operations other than war such as humanitarian relief, the Army is forced to choose between overtaxing already strained Active Component forces or seeking mobilization of reserve units which also has long-term costs in terms of retainability and recruitment. While the Army Reserve has most of the assets needed for human relief, there are serious

problems with relying on volunteerism rather than a unit call-up. There are no easy and obvious solutions to this conundrum, but if the Army is to increase its proficiency at humanitarian relief, such force structure issues must be raised and examined. The only ultimate solution may be moving at least some support capabilities back to the Active Component.

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It would be easy for the Army to consider humanitarian relief in Sub-Saharan Africa a distraction. There is no question that such operations are costly to an organization already hard-pressed to retain proficiency in its primary warfighting missions. But three facts are clear. First, human disasters born of armed conflict will continue to plague Sub-Saharan Africa. Burundi, for instance, mirrors Rwanda and is currently teetering on the edge of disaster.<sup>44</sup> The Tutsi-dominated regime there apparently rebuffed a UN attempt to preempt further conflict.<sup>45</sup> Many other nations have all or most of the preconditions for disaster. Most deadly of all would be human disasters in Africa's giants, especially Nigeria or Zaire. Second, the American people will sometimes demand U.S. engagement in African disasters. While a number of factors including media activity and the extent to which political leaders mobilize attention determine whether a particular disaster captures public concern, when one does, the U.S. response must be effective and efficient. And third, only the U.S. military, particularly the Army/Air Force team, can muster the full range of capabilities to respond quickly and effectively to a human disaster where order has collapsed or local authorities resist relief efforts. The goals of the Army and the U.S. military in general should be, in order, to preempt, predict, and respond efficiently and effectively when preemption fails.

Because human disasters are often dramatic, highly-publicized events, the success with which the U.S. Army responds will affect its broader public support. The better that Army planners and leaders understand the nature of African conflict and the better they've prepared before disasters occur, the greater the likelihood the Army can fulfill the public's expectations at minimum cost to other efforts.

#### **ENDNOTES**

1. David Keen, "In Africa, Planned Suffering," *New York Times*, August 15, 1994, p. A15.

2. This section is based on Filip Reyntjens, "Rwanda: Recent History," *Africa South of the Sahara 1992*, London: Europa Publications, 1992, pp. 813-816.

3. Catharine Watson, *Exile from Rwanda: Background to an Invasion*, Washington, DC: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1991, pp. 2-3. While the notion that the Tutsi-Hutu difference is based on

caste is becoming increasingly accepted, the traditional notion was that the two represented different tribes, with the Tutsi a pastoralist people of Nilotic origin who emigrated to Rwanda relatively recently, and the Hutu an agricultural Bantu tribe (for example, Alan C.G. Best and Harm J. de Blij, *African Survey*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977, p. 467.)

4. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 3.

5. Charles Onyango-Obbo, "Rebellion Adds Momentum to Rwanda Reform," *Africa News*, April 26-May 9, 1993, p. 3.

6. Quoted in Alex Shoumatoff, "Rwanda's Aristocratic Guerrillas," *New York Times Magazine*, December 13, 1992, p. 44.

7. *Ibid.*; and Catharine Watson, "War and Waiting," *Africa Report*, November-December 1992, p. 53.

8. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 5.

9. "Why Rwanda?" *West Africa*, June 27-July 3, 1994, p. 1126.

10. Alan Rake, *Who's Who in Africa: Leaders for the 1990s*, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992, pp. 263-264

11. Reyntjens, "Rwanda: Recent History," p. 815.

12. Watson cites the 7,000 figure and claims 4,000 had deserted from Uganda's National Resistance Army (*Exile from Rwanda*, p. 2). Charles Onyango-Obbo agrees on the number 7,000 ("Rebellion Adds Momentum to Rwanda Reform," p. 3). The 10,000 figure is from Reyntjens, "Rwanda," p. 815.

13. Paul Kagame, head of the rebel army, was representing **Uganda** as a student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at the time of the invasion. According to Watson, Kagame was acting head of the Ugandan National Resistance Army's military intelligence from November 1989 to June 1990 (*Exile from Rwanda*, p. 13). He was at Fort Leavenworth, KS from June 1990 until his return to Rwanda when the invasion began.

14. William E. Schmidt, "Rwanda Puzzle: Is Uganda Taking Sides?" *New York Times*, April 18, 1994, p. A6.

15. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, pp. 13-14.

16. Onyango-Obbo, "Rebellion Adds Momentum to Rwanda Reform," p. 3. There were rumors that Rwigyema was murdered by opponents within the RPF (Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*, p. 14; Shoumatoff, "Rwanda's Aristocratic Guerrillas," p. 46).

17. Lindsey Hilsum, "Settling Scores," *Africa Report*, May/June 1994, p. 14.



18. Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 51.
19. "Peace Accord in Rwanda May Be the Real Thing," *Africa Report*, September/October 1993, p. 10.
20. "Rwanda Peace Agreement," Statement released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, August 4, 1993, reprinted in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, August 16, 1993, p. 584.
21. See Scott Stearns, "An Uneasy Peace," *Africa Report*, January/ February 1994, pp. 32-35.
22. Watson, "War and Waiting," p. 55.
23. Hilsum, "Settling Scores," p. 14; Jane Perlez, "Under the Bougainvillea, Hutu Litany on the Tutsi," *New York Times*, August 15, 1994, p. A6.
24. Douglas Jehl, "U.S. Policy: A Mistake?" *New York Times*, July 23, 1994, p. 1.
25. Nicola Jefferson, "The War Within," *Africa Report*, January/ February 1992, pp. 62-64.
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29. Lewis, "France Calls Rwanda Mission a Success." For illustrations of France's confusion on its role and mission in Rwanda, see the reports in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Sub-Saharan Africa Daily Report*, July 5, 1994, pp. 5-9. Raymond Bonner suggests that the French wanted to protect the Hutu government from the RPF but at a limited cost. ("As French Leave Rwanda, Critics Reverse Position," *New York Times*, August 23, 1994, p. A6.)
30. Nelson Kasfir, "There's Hope For Rwanda," *New York Times*, July 22, 1994, p. A27. For the membership and objectives of the new government, see *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Sub-Saharan Africa Daily Report*, July 20, 1994, p. 2.
31. Jane Perlez, "At Rwandan Camps, Life's a Bit Bearable," *New York Times*, August 3, 1994, p. A6.
32. Jerry Gray, "Rwanda Plans to Try Thousands For Massacres, New Leader Says," *New York Times*, August 3, 1994, pp.

A1, A6.

33. Charles W. Freeman, Jr., "U.S. Military Interests in Postapartheid South Africa," *CSIS Africa Notes*, No. 160, May 1994, p. 2.

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36. President Clinton, Remarks from a White House Conference on Africa, Washington DC, June 27, 1994, reprinted in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, July 4, 1994, p. 446.

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