

Discussions Questions for February 27 – Group 2

*Questions:*

One reason some people think that it is ok to kill in war is for reasons of self-defense. If you do think it's ok to kill in self-defense, a natural question is: is it ok for third parties to intervene in defense of others? To help you answer this question, I've presented a case study below. You should think about the answer to the following two questions: (1) When, if ever, is it morally acceptable for third parties to intervene in defense of others? (2) Would the US have been justified in intervening in Rwanda?

*Case (excerpt from Wikipedia article "Rwandan Genocide")*

The Rwandan Genocide was a genocidal mass slaughter of Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda by members of the Hutu majority. During the approximate 100-day period from April 7, 1994, to mid-July, an estimated 500,000-1,000,000 Rwandans were killed, constituting as much as 20% of the country's total population and 70% of the Tutsi then living in Rwanda. The genocide was planned by members of the core political elite known as the akazu, many of whom occupied positions at top levels of the national government. Perpetrators came from the ranks of the Rwandan army, the National Police (gendarmerie), government-backed militias including the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi, and the Hutu civilian population.

The genocide took place in the context of the Rwandan Civil War, an ongoing conflict beginning in 1990 between the Hutu-led government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which was largely composed of Tutsi refugees whose families had fled to Uganda following earlier waves of Hutu violence against the Tutsi. International pressure on the Hutu-led government of Juvnal Habyarimana resulted in a cease-fire in 1993 with a roadmap to implement the Arusha Accords that would create a power-sharing government with the RPF. This agreement displeased many conservative Hutu, including members of the Akazu, who viewed it as conceding to enemy demands.

Among the broader Hutu populace, the RPF military campaign had also intensified support for the so-called “Hutu Power” ideology, which portrayed the RPF as an alien force intent on reinstating the Tutsi monarchy and enslaving the Hutus, a prospect met with extreme opposition.

On April 6, 1994, an airplane carrying Habyarimana and Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down on its descent into Kigali, killing all on board. Genocidal killings began the following day: soldiers, police and militia quickly executed key Tutsi and moderate Hutu leaders, then erected checkpoints and barricades and used Rwandans’ national identity cards to systematically verify their ethnicity and kill Tutsi. These forces recruited or pressured Hutu civilians to arm themselves with machetes, clubs, blunt objects and other weapons to rape, maim and kill their Tutsi neighbors and destroy or steal their property. The breach of the peace agreement led the RPF to restart their offensive and rapidly seize control of the northern part of the country before capturing Kigali in mid-July, bringing an end to the genocide. During these events and in their aftermath, the United Nations (UN) and countries including the United States, Great Britain and Belgium were criticized for their inaction, including failure to strengthen the force and mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) peacekeepers, while observers criticized the government of France for alleged support of the genocidal regime after the genocide had begun.

The genocide had a lasting and profound impact on Rwanda and its neighboring countries. The pervasive use of war rape caused a spike in HIV infection, including babies born of rape to newly infected mothers; many households were headed by orphaned children or widows. The destruction of infrastructure and a severe depopulation of the country crippled the economy, challenging the nascent government to achieve rapid economic growth and stabilization. The RPF military victory and installation of an RPF-dominated government prompted many Hutus to flee to neighboring countries, particularly in the eastern portion of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) where the Hutu genocidaires began to regroup in refugee camps along the border with Rwanda. Declaring a need to avert further genocide, the RPF-led government led military incursions into Zaire, including the First (1996-97) and Second (1998-2003) Congo Wars. ... Large Rwandan Hutu and Tutsi populations continue to live as refugees throughout the region.