THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICT OF RWANDA

Ayomide Racheal Kelani[1] ⓘ **Ruth Oore-ofe Ogunnowo[2]** ⓘ
T.J. Mudau[3] ⓘ

1. Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.
2. Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.
3. University Of Venda, South Africa.

Article Information:

Abstract:

The inter-ethnic conflict in Rwanda led to the deaths of over 800,000 people, particularly the Tutsis. It was a testament to the failure of the international community, particularly, the United Nations. Goal 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasizes on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. This study will hereby examine the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), which was deployed to maintain peace and stability in Rwanda, exploring the organization's response to the crisis and the factors that contributed to its ineffectiveness. This study employs the qualitative approach analyzing primary sources through the use of snowballing for identification of six (6) key stakeholders of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) as in-depth interviews for primary data collection while the secondary sources include UN documents, reports, newspapers, and academic literature. The study finds out that the role of the United Nations in Rwanda was marked by various challenges including: inadequate mandate and resources for UNAMIR, failure to respond to early warning signals of the genocide, ineffective communication and coordination among UN agencies, lack of cultural understanding and contextual knowledge on the ability to navigate the conflicts in Rwanda. The UN's failure in preventing the inter-ethnic conflict in Rwanda was due to a combination of factors including inadequate resources, poor decision-making process and lack of political will, although, there were some post-genocide events which was successful. The paper recommends that the tragedy highlights the need for the UN to reassess the strategies in its peacekeeping mandates and improve its responses to early warning signs of the conflict.

1.0 INTODUCTION

Africa has been a particular focal point of UN peacekeeping efforts, with the continent accounting for the majority of current peacekeeping missions.[1] The history of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations in Africa can be dated back to the 1960s, when the UN deployed its first peacekeeping mission to the Congo.[2] Since then, the UN has been involved in numerous peacekeeping operations in Africa, with varying degrees of success. Some of the notable UN peacekeeping missions in Africa include those in Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. The United Nations (UN) has been involved in peacekeeping operations in Africa for several decades to maintain stability and peaceful coexistence among nations with varying degrees of success since its inception in 1945.[3]

Despite its intervention in the continent over the years, it is impeccant to note that the UN peacekeeping effort has not always been successful as some missions have been criticized for the performance issues of the UN personnel.[4] Following the events in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Somalia and Rwanda, there have been different perceptions towards the UN peacekeeping operations. However, peacekeeping missions by the UN are based on its guiding principles, which provide the legal framework for the actions taken by the UN to resolve conflicts and maintain peace.[5] Goal 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasizes on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. It also highlights the need to ensure that at every levels, all individual have access to justice and to make certain that effective, accountable and inclusive institutions are established.[6]

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[1] Bokeriya, Svetlana A., and Alexandra V. Khudaykulova. 'UN Peacekeeping in Africa: Nature, Scope and Development', (2023) 23 (3), *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 435-450.

[2] MacQueen N. 'United Nations peacekeeping in Africa since 1960', (2014), Routledge.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Lipson, M. 'Performance under ambiguity: International organization performance in UN peacekeeping', (2010) 5, The Review of International Organizations, 249-284; Marszałek-Kawa, J., & Kawa, R. 'The UN Peacekeeping Missions in Africa: Comparative Analysis'. (2020) 13 (1), Journal of International Studies, 145-165.

[5] Okowa, P. 'International law in crisis: Challenges of UN peacekeeping operations', (2019) 9 (1), International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research, 48-55.

[6] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 'Sustainable Development Goal 16'. 2023. Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16, Accessed 10 June, 2025.

Therefore, studying the role of UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, especially Rwanda, is critical not just for the sake of understanding how the UN operates in conflict resolution[7], but to also ensure that peaceful coexistence is achieved for the purpose of sustainable development in the nation.

The inter-ethnic conflict in Rwanda, otherwise referred to as the Rwandan genocide of 1994[8] was one of the darkest chapters in modern history, it also stands as one of the most tragic failures of the international community, particularly the United Nations (UN). The genocide resulted in the deaths of over 800,000 people, majorly from the Tutsis ethnic group within 100 days.[9] From April to July 1994, Rwanda was rocked by an intense wave of ethnic violence that devastated the nation and shocked the world. The UN, which is responsible for peacekeeping and aid, faced serious challenges in trying to manage the crisis. Despite its established principles for intervention, the UN struggled with inefficiencies and limitations. Due to this, the role of the international community, especially the UN, in the inter-ethnic conflict of Rwanda has been often criticized, especially regarding its peacekeeping mission's effectiveness, decision -making processes, and overall preparedness to handle the situation.[10]

This paper is divided into ten sections. The section after the introduction gives an historical overview of the Rwandan Genocide. Section three discusses the UN institutions and mandates established to ensure sustainable peace and development in Rwanda. The fourth section expatiates on the effects of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda. Section five examines some of the challenges encountered by the UN peacekeeping institutions in Rwanda. The sixth section further evaluates the UN Guiding Principles for peaceful coexistence in Rwanda. Section seven highlights the methodology adopted for the purpose of the study.

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[7] Melton, G. 'United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda' in R. C. Hickey (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy* Wiley-Blackwell (2018).

[8] Benjamin Cynthia. 'Tearing Rwanda Apart: An Examination of Theories of Inter-Ethnic Conflict and Genocide', (2002), National Library of Canada= Bibliothèque nationale du Canada, Ottawa.

[9] Des Forges Alison. 'Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda', (1999) Human Rights Watch.

[10] Barnett Michael. Eyewitness to a genocide: the United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press.

The analysis and discussion of findings are given in the eight section. Section nine gives a conclusion of the study while recommendations for ensuring sustainable peace are given in the tenth section of this study.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Historical Context of the Rwandan Genocide

The roots of the Rwandan conflict lie in the long-standing ethnic tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi populations. These tensions were exacerbated by colonial rule and post-colonial politics. During Belgian rule, Tutsis were given preferential treatment in administrative roles, which led to social and economic disparities and resentment among the Hutu majority.[11] After Rwanda gained independence in 1962, these divisions only deepened, and the power shifted to the majority Hutus, resulting in systemic discrimination and periodic violence against the Tutsis.[12]

By the early 1990's Rwanda was marked by political instability, economic hardships, and rising ethnic tensions, the Rwandan Civil War was underway, intensifying ethnic hostilities and setting the scene for the 1994 genocide.[13] The signing of the Arusha Accords in 1993, aimed at power – sharing between the Hutu-led political government and the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), brought a temporary pause in hostilities but failed to address the deep-seated animosities.[14] It was within this volatile context that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was deployed in October 1993 to oversee the

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[11] Nikuze Donatien, 'The Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Origins, causes, implementation, consequences, and the post-genocide era', (2014) 3 (5) *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 1086-1098; Mamdani Mahmood. 'When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda', (2020), Princeton University Press.

[12] Prunier Gérard. The Rwanda crisis: History of a genocide, (1997), Columbia University Press; Melvin Jennifer. 'Reconciling Rwanda: Unity, nationality and state control', (2020), University of London press.

[13] Mann Michael. 'The dark side of democracy: Explaining ethnic cleansing', (2005) Cambridge University Press.

[14] Uvin Peter. 'Aiding violence: The development enterprise in Rwanda', (1998), Kumarian Press.

implementation of the peace agreement [15](Dallaire, 2004). Political instability grew, especially with the rise of extremist Hutus.

The violence erupted on April 7, 1994, following the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana. The genocide, marked by horrific brutality, saw extremist Hutus systematically killing Tutsis and moderate Hutus. In just 100 days, nearly 800,000 people were murdered, often with machetes and small arms.[16]

2.2 UN's Mandate and Operations in Rwanda – Establishment of UNAMIR

UNAMIR was established by the UN Security Council Resolution 872, in October 1993 to assist the implementation of the Arusha Accords. Its initial mandate was to monitor ceasefire, support the demobilization of troops, and assist in humanitarian efforts.[17] However, the mission was hampered by several limitations from the onset. The Security Council's decision to deploy a small peacekeeping force, with limited resources and a rigid mandate that emphasized impartiality and neutrality, severely constrained its ability to act decisively in the face of escalating violence.[18]

Despite the early warnings from various sources, including UNAMIR's Force Commander General Romeo Dallaire. About an imminent genocide, the mission's capacity to prevent the crisis was undermined by the UN's operational constraints and lack of political will among member states.[19] The mission was not equipped to intervene militarily or prevent civilians, as its rules of engagement strictly limited the use of

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[15] Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009). Vintage Canada.
[16] Gourevitch, P. (1998). We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda. Farrar, Strays and Giroux; Melendez Joshua David. Deconstructing the Pillars of Memory: Gender, Memory and the Rwanda Genocide', (2020), San Diego State University.
[17] Laegreid Turid. 'UN peacekeeping in Rwanda: In The Path of a Genocide', (2017) 231-252. Routledge.
[18] Barnett Michael. Eyewitness to a genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press.
[19] Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009). Vintage Canada.

force to self-defense.[20] The UNAMIR's mandate, defined under Chapter VI of the UN Charter (Peaceful Settlement of Disputes), further explains the extent of its limitation to peacekeeping tasks which required consent from the parties involved and Chapter VII which enables the Security Council to take coercive action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. This meant the mission was constrained in its ability to respond effectively to a crisis.[21]

Faced by significant operational constraints, including a limited mandate, that restricted the use of force, inadequate resources, and insufficient personnel, the UNAMIR's intervention was severely hampered in its ability to respond effectively to escalating violence.[22] In 1994, when the genocide began, UNAMIR faced significant hurdles. With about 2,500 troops on the ground, the mission was ill-equipped and lacked the resources to deal with the scale of violence. The situation worsened when the UN Security Council decided to reduce the troop levels to just 270, leaving the mission severely under-resourced and ineffective.[23]

2.3 The United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Rwanda

The United Nations peacekeeping missions in Rwanda, particularly the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), have been widely criticized for their failure to prevent the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of over 800,000 people. According to the former Force Commander of UNAMIR, the mission was severely hamstrung by inadequate resources, poor communication, and a lack of political will from the international community. Dallaire [24]argues that the UN Security Council's decision to reduce the mission's troop strength and reject his request for reinforcements in the face of escalating violence was a critical mistake that ultimately enabled the genocide to unfold.

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[20] Adelman, Howard, and Astri Suhrke, eds, 'The path of a genocide: The Rwanda crisis from Uganda to Zaire', (1999), Transaction Publishers.

[21] Gourevitch, P. (1998). We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda. Farrar, Strays and Giroux.

[22] Jones Bruce. 'Peacemaking in Rwanda: The dynamics of failure: In Peacemaking in Rwanda', (2001), Lynne Rienner Publishers.

[23] Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009). Vintage Canada.

[24] Ibid.

Another significant factor contributing to the failure of UNAMIR was the inadequate mandate and rules of engagement. As Melvern [25] notes, the mission's mandate was limited to providing humanitarian assistance and facilitating a peaceful transition, rather than taking decisive action to prevent the violence. This restricted the mission's ability to respond effectively to the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground.

Furthermore, the UN's lacks of understanding of the complex political dynamics in Rwanda and its failure to engage with local stakeholders have been cited as major contributors to the mission's failure. Des Forges [26] argues that the UN's reliance on the Rwandan government's assurances of peaceful intentions, despite clear evidence to the contrary, was a grave mistake. The UN's failure to engage with local civil society groups and opposition parties meant that it was out of touch with the realities on the ground and unable to respond effectively to the crisis.

The failure of UNAMIR has also been attributed to the lack of coordination and communication between the UN and other international actors. As Barnett [27] notes, the UN's failure to coordinate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other humanitarian agencies meant that there was a lack of coherence in the international response to the crisis.

In addition, the UN's response to the genocide was also hampered by the legacy of colonialism and the resulting power dynamics between the global North and South. As Mamdani [28] argues, the UN's failure to take decisive action in Rwanda was in part due to the perceived lack of strategic importance of the country to the global North and this has not only affected Rwanda but other countries like Bosnia due to the fact that they were not part of the interest of the global North and therefore, it is not their responsibility.

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[25] Melvern Linda. 'A people betrayed: the role of the West in Rwanda's genocide', (2024). Bloomsbury Publishing.

[26] Des Forges Alison. 'Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda', (1999) Human Rights Watch.

[27] Barnett Michael. Eyewitness to a genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press.

[28] Mamdani Mahmood. 'When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda', (2020), Princeton University Press.

Despite these challenges, there are lessons that can be learned from the UN's experience in Rwanda. As Power [29] notes, the failure of the international community to respond to the genocide has led to a re-evaluation of the principles of humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect. The Rwandan genocide has also led to a greater emphasis on the importance of early warning systems and preventive diplomacy in conflict prevention.

2.4 The Effect of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda

The 1994 Rwandan genocide, which resulted in the deaths of over 800,000 people, was one of the most devastating humanitarian crises of the 20th century. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the international community intervened with a peacekeeping mission, led by the United Nations, to restore peace and stability to the war-torn country. However, the effectiveness of this mission has been a subject of debate among scholars and policymakers.

According to Dallaire [30] the failure of the international community to intervene promptly and decisively in the early stages of the genocide was a critical factor in the escalation of the crisis. The authors argue that the lack of political will and resources hindered the ability of the UN peacekeeping mission to respond effectively to the situation. This sentiment is echoed by Barnett[31] who contends that the UN's reluctance to intervene was rooted in a flawed understanding of the nature of the conflict and the interests of the great powers.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that the peacekeeping mission did have a positive impact on the ground. For instance, Jones [32] noted that the deployment of UN peacekeepers helped to reduce violence and create a sense of security among the civilian population. Similarly,

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[29] Powell, K. 'The African Union's Role in Peacekeeping: Lessons from Rwanda', (2011), Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

[30] Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009), Vintage Canada.

[31] Barnett Michael. Eyewitness to a genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press

[32] Jones Bruce. 'Peacemaking in Rwanda: The dynamics of failure: In Peacemaking in Rwanda', (2001), Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Autesserre[33] suggests that the peacekeeping mission played a crucial role in facilitating the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes.

However, other scholars have raised concerns about the long-term impact of the peacekeeping mission on Rwanda's political and social structures. For example, Prunier [34] argues that the international community's focus on short-term stabilization measures undermined the country's ability to address the root causes of the conflict. Similarly, Reyntjens [35] suggests that the peacekeeping mission's emphasis on maintaining security and stability created a power vacuum that was exploited by the Rwandan government, leading to further human rights abuses.

In addition to these critiques, there are also questions about the effectiveness of the peacekeeping mission's mandate and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances on the ground. As Powell [36] notes, the mission's initial mandate was focused on providing humanitarian assistance, rather than addressing the root causes of the conflict. This limited mandate meant that the mission was ill-equipped to respond to the complex political and military dynamics of the conflict.

Furthermore, the peacekeeping mission's relationship with the Rwandan government has been a subject of controversy. As Lemarchand [37] argues, the mission's close ties with the government led to allegations of bias and partiality, which undermined its credibility and effectiveness. Similarly, Straus [38] suggests that the mission's failure to hold the government accountable for human rights abuses contributed to a culture of impunity in the country.

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[33] Autesserre Séverine. 'The trouble with the Congo: Local violence and the failure of international peacebuilding'. (2010) 115. Cambridge University Press.

[34] Prunier Gérard. 'The Rwanda crisis: History of a genocide', (1997), Columbia University Press.

[35] Reyntjens Filip. 'The great African war: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006', (2009), Cambridge University Press.

[36] Powell, K. 'The African Union's Role in Peacekeeping: Lessons from Rwanda', (2011), Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

[37] Lemarchand René. '*The dynamics of violence in Central Africa*', (2009), University of Pennsylvania Press.

[38] Straus Scott. 'The order of genocide: Race, power, and war in Rwanda', (2019), Cornell University Press.

2.5 Challenges faced by the United Nations

This section emphasizes on the issues the United Nations confronted which hampered their intervention in the inter-ethnic conflict of Rwanda. One major issue was the restrictions imposed by UNAMIR's mandate. UN peacekeepers were restricted to monitoring and reporting violations rather than actively preventing violence, which highlights the lack of capacity that prevented the effectiveness of the UN intervention in the genocide.[39] Operating under Chapter VI, the mission needed consent from the Rwandan government to act. This meant that the UNAMIR could not take decisive actions to stop the genocide or protect civilians without the government's approval.[40] For instance, as the genocide unfolded, peacekeepers were stuck in defensive roles and unable to actively intervene. This inaction allowed the violence to continue unchecked.[41]

Resource and Personnel Issues also served as another significant limitation of the UN intervention in Rwanda. UNAMIR's initial setup was underfunded and lacking in resources. The mission struggled with logistical support and had no means to secure additional resources. As the genocide escalated, the mission's inability to adapt became glaringly obvious.[42] For example, peacekeepers were unable to protect refugee camps or intervene in violent areas due to their limited numbers and lack of equipment.[43]

Political factors also played a huge role in shaping the UN's response. Major powers, including the U.S. and France, were reluctant to take strong action, partly due to concerns about military casualties and a lack of strategic interests. This hesitation delayed a more decisive

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[39] Jones Bruce. 'Peacemaking in Rwanda: The dynamics of failure: In Peacemaking in Rwanda', (2001), Lynne Rienner Publishers.

[40] Barnett Michael. Eyewitness to a genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press.

[41] Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009). Vintage Canada.

[42] Op. Cit.

[43] Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009). Vintage Canada.

intervention.[44] The reluctance to call the situation a genocide initially also slowed down the response and influenced how the Security Council approached UNAMIR's mandate and resources.[45]

The UN's internal processes also contributed to the problem. Decision-making was slow, hindered by layers of bureaucracy that delayed crucial decisions. Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire, leading UNAMIR, faced significant hurdles in securing reinforcements and a stronger mandate due to this bureaucratic inertia.[46]

3.0 GAPS IN EXISTING LAWS/POLICIES CONCERNING INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY

The principle of non-intervention, which respects state sovereignty, was a major issue during the Rwandan genocide. While important for maintaining international order, it became a barrier when urgent action was needed. The principle prevented the UN from intervening forcefully in Rwanda's internal affairs, even as mass atrocities occurred.[47] UNAMIR's adherence to this principle meant peacekeepers couldn't actively stop the violence without government consent, allowing the genocide to proceed largely unchallenged.[48]

The principle of impartiality, requiring peacekeepers to stay neutral, became problematic during the genocide. The violence was heavily one-sided, with Hutu extremists targeting Tutsis. Maintaining impartiality allowed the perpetrators to continue their attacks without interference.[49]

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[44] Power Samantha. 'A problem from hell": America and the age of genocide', (2013). Hachette UK, 2013.
[45] Gourevitch, P. 'We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda', (1998), Farrar, Strays and Giroux.
[46] Barnett Michael. 'Eyewitness to a genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press; Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009). Vintage Canada.
[47] Power Samantha. 'A problem from hell": America and the age of genocide', (2013). Hachette UK, 2013.
[48] Dallaire Roméo. 'Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda', (2009). Vintage Canada.
[49] Barnett Michael. 'Eyewitness to a genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press.

For example, the UN's reluctance to take a stand or confront the genocidal forces directly contributed to the failure to protect the Tutsi population.[50]

The UN's principles for humanitarian protection, which stress safeguarding civilians and preventing atrocities, were not effectively applied during the genocide. Despite clear evidence of mass killings and human rights violations, the UN struggled to enforce these principles due to a lack of mandate and political will (Melvern, 2004). The failure to protect civilians and intervene highlighted the gap between the UN's humanitarian principles and the practicalities of enforcing them in a high-intensity conflict (Power, 2002).

Having examined the challenges of the UN guiding principles and the challenges of the UN in its intervention in the inter-ethnic conflict of Rwanda, it is important to critically examine the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), which was deployed to maintain peace and stability in Rwanda. Therefore, for confirmation and validation purposes, a critical examination was carried out through a qualitative method of analysis. Also, a thematic analysis was conducted on the data collected from the respondents and it reveals a multifaceted understanding of the limitations and challenges faced by the United Nations (UN) in its peacekeeping operations, particularly in the context of Africa and the Rwandan conflict, hence, the following deductions.

3.1 Methodology

The research method adopted for this study is mainly anchored on the use of primary and secondary sources of gathering information from the participants on the field, that is, researchers at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in Lagos, Nigeria. The primary information called is anchored on the use of qualitative method precisely the adoption of in-depth interviews. The study population consists of 6 participants purposely selected for the study through the use of unstructured

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[50] Gourevitch, P. 'We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda', (1998), Farrar, Strays and Giroux.

questionnaire and tape recording. Non-probability sampling techniques such as snowballing and purposive sampling techniques were adopted for the study. The snowballing was used for the identification of the participants to interviews before purposive sampling technique was adopted to carry out the study using face to face method of data collections. All ethical conditions such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were observed. Thematic method of data analysis was adopted for the interpretation and analysis of the primary data collected from the participants.

The secondary information was extracted from international and national publications such as UN resolution, reports, newspapers from media outlets articles, journals, textbooks, catalogue, official gazette among others in line with the set research questions designed for the study. In the course of the study, the outcome of the primary information was used to corroborate and compare the relationship between the outcome of the primary and secondary information collected from the field. This has aided the growth and development of the research inquiry.

3.2 Analysis of Findings

Findings 1:

Based on the responses provided by the five respondents, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes and generate codes that reflect their perspectives on the importance and effectiveness of the UN Guiding Principles in the prevention of conflicts in Africa.

Table 1

THEMES	CODES	DEFINITION	EXCERPTS
Operational Constraints of the UN in Conflict Prevention	Skepticism about UN Effectiveness Complex Local Dynamics Challenges in Implementation. Resource Constraints in	This theme encompasses the limitations of the UN in addressing the root causes of conflicts in Africa, such as the lack of a	Respondent 1: "The UN cannot be everywhere at the same time...the UN's effectiveness in conflict prevention may

	Peacekeeping Missions	standing military army and resource constraints that affect the execution of its mandates.	be limited by its inability to address the root causes of these complex issues." Respondent 2: "The implementation of these missions is often complicated by resource constraints, complex local dynamics, and occasional breaches of behavior."
Effectiveness of UN Peacebuilding in Specific Contexts	Effectiveness of Mediation after Conflict Escalation Success of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Context-Dependent Success of UN Principles	This theme highlights instances where the UN's post-conflict peacebuilding efforts have been successful, indicating that the effectiveness of the UN's guiding principles is often context-dependent.	Respondent 3: "Some conflict prevention strategies have been effective...cites the example of Rwanda where post-conflict peacebuilding processes...have worked well."

Influence of Local and External Factors on Conflict Prevention	Impact of Complex Local Dynamics Challenges Due to Weak State Institutions Corruption and External Influences	This theme addresses the impact of local dynamics, weak state institutions, corruption, and external influences on the success of the UN's conflict prevention efforts.	Respondent 4: "Success depends on the specific context of the conflict, local cooperation, and available resources." Respondent 5: "These principles have been compromised by weak state institutions, corruption, and outside influences."
Need for Improved Enforcement and Accountability Mechanisms	Need for Stronger Enforcement Mechanisms State Sovereignty and Noninterference as Barriers	This theme emphasizes the necessity for the UN to develop stronger enforcement mechanisms and hold states accountable to ensure the effectiveness of its guiding principles.	Respondent 5: "To be more effective, the UN must build more rigorous enforcement mechanisms and hold states accountable for their actions."
Impact of UN Guiding Principles	Compromise of UN Principles in Practice Limited Impact in Preventing Conflicts	This theme explores the mixed success of the UN guiding principles in	Respondent 4: "The UN's guiding principles provide a strong

		preventing conflicts, acknowledging both their contributions to peace and their limitations due to various challenges.	framework for peacekeeping efforts, but their success depends on the specific context of the conflict." Respondent 5: "The principles' emphasis on state sovereignty and noninterference has been used to justify inaction in the face of human rights violations."

Findings 2:

This analysis explains of the UN peacekeeping mission's limitations during the Rwandan conflict reveals significant challenges in cooperation, impartiality, international support, and cultural understanding. These limitations severely compromised the mission's ability to prevent and effectively respond to the genocide. While the UN had intentions aligned with peacekeeping principles, the structural, operational, and contextual barriers proved too great to overcome, resulting in a tragic failure to protect the Rwandan population.

Table 2:

THEMES	CODES	DEFINITION OF TERMS	EXCERPTS

Lack of effective cooperation, communication and coordination	Cultural differences Lack of trust Conflicting interests Poor communication	This theme revolves around the difficulties the UN peacekeeping mission faced in establishing effective collaboration with local authorities in Rwanda, which was hindered by cultural differences, lack of trust, and conflicting agendas.	- Respondent 1 highlighted cultural differences and historical tensions as significant obstacles to cooperation. - Respondent 2 emphasized a lack of trust and conflicting interests between the UN and local actors. - Respondent 4 pointed out the poor coordination and communication between the UN and local authorities. - Respondent 3 noted that although initial cooperation was ineffective, it improved after the genocide. - However, Respondent 5 believed that while cooperation

			was satisfactory, it required ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships.
Challenges in upholding impartiality and neutrality	Limited mandates Resource constraints Perception bias Deviation from neutrality	This theme examines how the UN struggled to maintain the principles of impartiality and neutrality due to limitations in resources and the complex nature of the conflict, leading to perceptions of bias and ineffectiveness.	- Respondent 1 noted that the UN's minimal involvement made impartiality and neutrality insignificant. - Respondent 2 argued that the UNAMIR's limited mandate and resources prevented it from maintaining these principles. - Respondent 3 believed the operation aligned with impartiality and neutrality based on

			personal experience. - Respondent 4 acknowledged the mission's intent to be impartial but highlighted that resource limitations led to perceptions of bias. - Respondent 5 asserted that the mission's actions deviated significantly from impartiality and neutrality, contributing to the genocide's severity.
Insufficient support and cooperation from the international community	Lack of intervention Resource inefficiency Conflicting national interests	This theme highlights the lack of adequate support from the international community, including major powers, which significantly hampered the UN's	- Respondent 1 emphasized the role of the church in supporting the UN but noted that broader international support was lacking. - Respondent 2 highlighted the refusal of major powers to intervene

		peacekeeping efforts.	due to the risks and costs, leaving the UN with insufficient resources. - Respondent 4 lamented the disappointingly low level of international support, which severely hampered the mission's effectiveness. - Respondent 5 also pointed to inadequate support and cooperation due to conflicting national interests.
Inadequate cultural understanding of contextual knowledge	Underestimation of ethnic tensions Lack of local knowledge Failure to recognize warning signs	This theme focuses on the UN's failure to fully understand the cultural and ethnic dynamics in Rwanda, which led to ineffective interventions and a failure to prevent the	- Respondent 1 acknowledged that cultural misunderstandings were a barrier to the mission's success. - Respondent 2 emphasized the importance of understanding local society and culture,

		escalation of the conflict.	noting that the UNAMIR underestimated Rwanda's ethnic dynamics. - Respondent 3 highlighted the UN's lack of understanding of the terrain and guerrilla tactics of the militias, which hampered operations. - Respondent 4 echoed the impact of inadequate cultural understanding on the mission's effectiveness. - Respondent 5 criticized the mission's failure to recognize warning signs of impending genocide and its misguided reliance on traditional conflict resolution strategies.

4.0 ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES

The report of the Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, on the Causes of Conflict and the Role of the United Nations (1992), highlights this excerpt: "Ethnic conflicts are complex and often rooted in deep-seated historical and cultural factors... The United Nations must take a more nuanced approach to understanding these conflicts." Therefore, the discussion of findings focuses on four key areas: effectiveness of the UN guiding principles, the UN's operational constraints, the influence of local and external factors, and the importance of effective cooperation and cultural understanding.

One of the most significant limitations identified in the UN's peacekeeping efforts in the 1994 Inter-Ethnic Conflict in Rwanda was the operational constraints stemming from the lack of a standing military force and inadequate resources. As highlighted by Respondent 2, the UN's peacekeeping missions are frequently complicated by resource shortages, which limit their ability to respond effectively to complex conflicts. This issue was particularly evident in Rwanda, where the UN's rigid mandate and limited resources severely constrained its ability to act on early warnings of genocide. The World Bank report identifies structural limitations like inadequate funding, lack of coordination, and limited access to conflict-affected areas.[51]

Moreover, Respondent 1 pointed out that the UN's inability to address the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty and inequality, further hinders its effectiveness in preventing conflicts proactively. This limitation reflects a broader challenge in peacekeeping missions, where the focus often remains on immediate security concerns rather than addressing the underlying socio-economic issues that fuel conflicts. The UN's capacity to prevent conflicts is limited by limited resources, bureaucratic constraints, and political will. The UN Secretary-General's Report titled "The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace" also supports that the limitations of the UN's capacity to prevent

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[51] World Bank. 'World Bank Group Approaches to Mobilize Private Capital for Development. An Independent Evaluation'. (2020). Independent Evaluation Group. Washington, DC: World Bank.

conflicts include limited resources, bureaucratic constraints, and lack of political will.[52]

Despite these challenges, the UN has achieved notable successes in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, particularly in Rwanda. Respondent 3 emphasized that the implementation of post-conflict peacebuilding processes in Rwanda has been effective, contributing to long-term stabilization and reconciliation. However, these successes are context-dependent, and the effectiveness of the UN's efforts varies significantly across different settings.

The influence of local dynamics and external factors emerged as a critical theme affecting the UN's ability to prevent conflicts. The report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) emphasizes the importance of maintaining impartiality and neutrality in humanitarian work, and notes that this can be challenging in situations where there are multiple parties involved with conflicting interests.[53] The respondents also consistently pointed to the complex local dynamics in African countries, characterized by weak state institutions, corruption, and deeply entrenched social divisions, which complicate the implementation of UN guiding principles. For example, Respondent 5 argued that these local challenges often compromise the effectiveness of the UN's interventions, making it difficult to maintain impartiality and neutrality.

External influences, such as great power rivalries and international economic pressures, also play a significant role in shaping the UN's response to conflicts. Respondent 4 noted that these external factors can undermine the implementation of UN principles as powerful states prioritize their national interests over humanitarian concerns. This was particularly evident in Rwanda, where the international community's focus on other global conflicts, such as Kosovo, diverted attention and resources away from the escalating genocide.

The emphasis on state sovereignty and noninterference, as highlighted by Respondent 5, further complicates the UN's ability to intervene in situations where human rights violations are evident. This principle has

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[52] United Nations. 'Promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa: Report of the Secretary General'. (2021). New York: United Nations.

[53] Plattner Denise. 'ICRC neutrality and neutrality in humanitarian assistance.' International Review of the Red Cross *(1961-1997)* (1996), 36 (311): 161-180.

often been used as a pretext for inaction, allowing governments to evade accountability for their actions.

Effective cooperation, communication, and cultural understanding are crucial for the success of UN peacekeeping missions. The analysis revealed that the UN's peacekeeping mission in Rwanda was hindered by poor cooperation and communication with local authorities. Respondents emphasized that cultural differences and a lack of trust between the UN and local actors led to ineffective collaboration, further complicating the mission's efforts.

Respondent 1 noted that these cultural differences created significant barriers to establishing effective partnerships with local authorities. The UN's lack of understanding of local cultural and ethnic dynamics, as well as its failure to recognize the warning signs of impending genocide, significantly undermined the mission's effectiveness. This was compounded by the mission's reliance on traditional conflict resolution strategies, which were not adequately adapted to the specific challenges posed by Rwanda's complex social fabric.

The theme of inadequate cultural understanding and contextual knowledge underscores the need for peacekeeping missions to be more culturally informed and context-sensitive. As Respondent 2 highlighted, the UN's gross underestimation of Rwanda's ethnic tensions and lack of local knowledge played a crucial role in its failure to prevent the genocide. The findings suggest that future peacekeeping efforts must prioritize cultural competency and a deeper understanding of local contexts to improve their effectiveness.

Throughout this study, the researcher did not fail to notice the frequent reoccurrence of the limitations of the UN in solving the inter-ethnic conflict of Rwanda, although, the UN was ineffective in preventing the conflict and also in its peacekeeping operations due to the limitations that have been analyzed consistently in this study, it served its purpose as a strategic mechanism in providing peacebuilding and reconciliation process in the country. The Report of the Secretary-General on the

Strengthening of the United Nations compliments this deduction.[54] Also, the conflict serves as a lesson for the United Nations to avoid future reoccurrence as stated in the UN General Assembly Resolution of 2005.[55] "The General Assembly expresses its deep concern about the persistence of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity... and calls upon all States to take concrete measures to prevent such crimes."

The analysis reveals that the effectiveness of the UN's peacekeeping missions, particularly in the context of Africa and the Rwandan conflict, is significantly influenced by a range of factors. Operational constraints, such as the lack of a standing military force and resource limitations, hinder the UN's ability to prevent conflicts effectively. Additionally, the influence of local dynamics, external political interests, and the need for greater cooperation, communication, and cultural understanding are critical in shaping the outcomes of peacekeeping missions.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The examination of the UN's failure in conflict prevention and peacekeeping and its successes in post-conflict peacebuilding, which are often context-dependent and can be compromised by weak state institutions and external influences, has to a large extent explored the importance and relevance of the UN's guiding principles through a holistic lens. The findings, however, underscore the need for the UN to adapt its strategies to address the specific conditions of each conflict, strengthen its capacity for accountability and enforcement, and prioritize cultural understanding in its peacekeeping efforts.

The role of the United Nations in the inter-ethnic conflict in Rwanda poses an interesting case that led to the revelation of some mysteries behind the challenges and hindrances faced by the UN peacekeepers in carrying out their operation, which led to the failure of the mission. Some of which include a lack of political will, lack of resources, bad decisions, lack of cooperation from the local authorities in Rwanda, lack of

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[54] See The Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20th June, 1995. A/50/201/, E/1995/74.

[55] See the United Nations Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the 16th September, 2005. The sixtieth session, Agenda items 46 and 120.

understanding of cultural practices and terrain, low level of support from the international community at large.

The inter-ethnic conflict in Rwanda is a perfect example of why the UN must be able to intervene and prevent or respond to humanitarian disasters. Over the years, the case of the genocide in Rwanda has become a sensitive matter for the UN and Rwanda itself has pushed the organization to do more in terms of peacekeeping and conflict prevention in future conflicts.

Their inactivity in Rwanda caused a complete review of the organization's peacekeeping operations and the creation of new theories on conflict prevention and resolution. The UN's experience in Rwanda further demonstrates the need for better early warning systems, better communication, and greater cooperation among member states. These lessons have been applied in subsequent peacekeeping missions, such as in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, where the UN has worked to prevent atrocities and promote stability. The UN continues to learn from past failures in order to improve its effectiveness in preventing and responding to humanitarian crises around the world.

In light of the lessons learned from the Rwandan genocide, the following recommendations are made to enhance the UN's role in responding to inter-ethnic conflicts and ensuring sustainable peace around the globe.

Mandate Flexibility: Future peacekeeping missions should have more responsive and flexible mandates that allow for robust action in crises. In a situation where the conflicts are threats to the lives of civilians or the peacekeepers, it is essential that the mandates are flexible to allow for the reallocation of resources and the mission's engagement in proactive measures. This is a more appreciable approach rather than waiting endlessly for the deliberations of the Security Council. Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which permits the use of force in the maintenance of international peace and security.[56] The UN Charter mandates missions to take legal and robust actions in protecting civilians and disarming the combatants even when the host nation has not given its consent.

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[56] Gourevitch, P. 'We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda', (1998), Farrar, Strays and Giroux.

Resource Allocation: Ensuring adequate resources and personnel for peacekeeping missions is crucial. UN peacekeeping missions have been incapacitated in fulfilling its mandates, due to inadequate resources, such as inefficient personnel and logistical support. As such, it becomes important for the UN to plan for rapid deployment and resource mobilization for swift response in cases of emergencies and escalating conflicts.[57]

Political Will: In spite of legal frameworks such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the United Nations Charter, the international community fails in cases where there are crimes against humanity. The early warning signs in Rwanda notwithstanding, the UN security Council was not swift in enforcing a collective action. There needs to be a stronger international political will to act decisively in the face of clear evidence of mass atrocities.[58]

The lessons from Rwanda have important implications for international humanitarian policy and sustainable peacekeeping efforts.

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[57] Barnett Michael. 'Eyewitness to a genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda', (2012), Cornell University Press.

[58] Conley-Zilkic, Bridget, and Alex de Waal. 'Setting the agenda for evidence-based research on ending mass atrocities', (2014). Journal of Genocide Research 16 (1), 55-76.