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German Foreign Policy and the Rwandan Genocide

A First Examination of Archival Records from the German Federal Foreign Office

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Summary

With approximately 800,000 deaths in one hundred days, the 1994 genocide against Rwanda's Tutsi population marked a global turning point that raised fundamental questions about the responsibility of the international community in the face of such mass violence. It cast doubt on the effectiveness of both the capacity of the United Nations (UN) and individual member states to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. While many aspects of the Rwandan genocide have since been examined in detail, numerous questions about Germany's foreign policy before and during the events of that time remain unanswered to this day. Drawing on archival research, this study shows that German diplomats in 1993 and 1994 were better informed about the situation in Rwanda than was previously known. However, they underestimated the ethnic dimension of the violence against the Tutsi as well as the degree to which it was planned and organized. They also overlooked crucial warning signs, such as the activities of Rwandan hate media. Although the German government debated steps to adjust its development cooperation with Rwanda and to withdraw a Bundeswehr advisory group that had been stationed in the country since 1978, relevant German ministries overall failed to coordinate and change Germany's policy toward Rwanda in the years before the genocide. Consequently, there was no early response from German policymakers to the deteriorating situation in the year leading up to the mass violence. Despite Germany's self-perception as a particularly credible political actor in Rwanda and the wider region at the time, the German government did not attempt to engage more actively in peace negotiations or initiate its own political initiatives. In the summer and fall of 1993, the year before the genocide, the UN, Rwandan authorities, and international partners repeatedly requested soldiers and equipment from the German government for the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda. Although the Foreign Office supported such a contribution, the federal government ultimately rejected a German participation in the mission due to concerns at the Ministry of Defense. The deployment of medics to the mission during the genocide was also prevented by the defense ministry, and the deployment of a German transport aircraft was delayed until after the genocide had ended.

In 2020 and early 2021, 26 years after the genocide, the Political Archive of the German Federal Foreign Office granted us access to a selection of relevant records amassed by the ministry. The documents contained in those records primarily cover the year 1993 and the months of the genocide (from April 1994 onward). Based on an analysis of the reviewed documents and additional original interviews, we summarize in this study new insights into Germany's foreign policy before and during the Rwandan genocide. We do so in three thematic areas that still warrant more extensive debates in German foreign policy today:

1. Early warning and political analysis for crisis prevention;
2. Coordination between relevant ministries and the strategic capacities of the German government in matters of crisis prevention and peacebuilding;
3. The conditions for early action and a timely response to warning signs.

Introduction: Germany and the Rwandan Genocide

With approximately 800,000 deaths in one hundred days between April and July 1994, the genocide against Rwanda's Tutsi population was a global turning point that raised fundamental questions about the responsibility of the international community in the face of genocide as well as about the effectiveness of the United Nations and its member states in preventing mass atrocities.* The world initially turned a blind eye to the killing, and then watched helplessly as the genocide unfolded. The UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, which had been deployed in the country since 1993, was first drastically downsized and then again reinforced, but far too late.

In the early nineties, Germany was neither a major player in world politics nor did it play a central role in the international response to the genocide in Rwanda. Belgium (as a longtime former colonial power), France (as a close francophone ally of the Rwandan president), and the United States (as a geopolitical powerhouse) were much more influential actors. In the German public and media coverage, the genocide in Rwanda was overshadowed by the war in Bosnia. At no point had Africa been at the center of German foreign policy. While the German armed forces did contribute medical units to UN missions in Somalia and Cambodia in the early nineties, the political debate in Germany's then-capital Bonn in 1993 and 1994 mostly focused on the conditions under which the German constitution allowed for Bundeswehr deployments at all. It was only in July 1994, a few days before the end of the Rwandan genocide, that the country's Federal Constitutional Court decided the deployment of German soldiers within multilateral missions was in fact constitutional – with the approval of the Bundestag, Germany's federal parliament.[1] Against this backdrop, the context of Bonn's foreign policy at the time can hardly be compared to Berlin's current role in Europe and the world.

That said, there are two main reasons why it is still important to research and examine the German role before and during the genocide in Rwanda. First, previous analyses of Germany's actions and policies have shown that Germany was by no means an insignificant actor in Rwanda in the early nineties. On the contrary, Germany maintained diverse and close contacts with the country over many decades, initially as a colonial power (1884–1916) and later as a partner in development cooperation. For many years, Rwanda was a focus country for German development efforts abroad. In the years before 1994, the Federal Republic was Rwanda's second-largest bilateral donor – just short of Belgium and contributing more funds than France. Germany also was one of the largest markets for Rwandan export goods.[2] Since 1982, the south-western federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda had developed a partnership arrangement (*jumelage*). Two German political foundations were also active in the country, and Deutsche Welle, Germany's international public broadcaster, had maintained a relay station in Kigali since 1965. From 1978 until April 1994, the German armed

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* Many opposition politicians and moderate public figures were also killed. See McDoom 2020 for a summary of different scholarly and government estimates of the death toll, as part of the forum in *Journal of Genocide Research* 22:1.

1 Federal Constitutional Court ruling BVerfGE 90, 286: "Out-of-area-Einsätze," 12.07.1994.

2 Regarding German colonial rule, see Prunier 1995, 23–26; see also Newbury 1988; Des Forges 2011. Regarding German development cooperation: data according to OECD.Stat, aid (ODA) disbursements to countries and regions (DAC2a): annual average, 1989–1993, in current million US dollars, rounded: all official bi- and multilateral donors 315.1; of which: Belgium 41.6, Germany 36.2, France 29.7, USA 16.4, Canada 14.5, Japan 14.1, Switzerland 14.1, Netherlands 6.8, Austria 6.7. https://tinyurl.com/y6f2vsas. On German-Rwandan economic relations: In 1991, Germany was the largest importer of Rwandan goods, accounting for 21% of Rwanda's total exports; 01.03.1993: Report No. 104/93, Order No. 160117, pp. 7–8. 0316–0338. See the appendix (Section 5) for a note on how archival sources are numbered and cited in this study. Dates are given as DD.MM.YYYY.

forces deployed a small advisory group to the country.[3] Furthermore, between 1992 and 1993, Germany participated as an observer in the negotiations for the Arusha Peace Agreement between the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebel army.[4] When it comes to diplomacy and development cooperation, Germany therefore did have a presence and significant voice in Kigali, alongside Belgium, France, and the US.

Secondly, previous research has concluded that important lessons for Berlin's current foreign policy remain to be learned from Germany's role before and during the genocide in Rwanda – and that a much more comprehensive examination of these events is necessary. In 2019, the parliamentary factions of the Green party and the Left party in the Bundestag called for an independent historical examination of German foreign policy during the period of the genocide.[5] Such an examination, however, remains in its early stages. An April 2014 study by Sarah Brockmeier, also published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, compiled publicly available sources and insights from 15 interviews with German eyewitnesses and experts to summarize the state of knowledge on Germany's role before and during the genocide.[6] While the role of German development cooperation at the time was examined early on by Jürgen Wolff and Andreas Mehler for the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in two confidential evaluations,[7] no detailed investigation to date has systematically evaluated the internal debates and decision-making in the German Federal Foreign Office and its diplomatic missions prior to and during the genocide – neither to preserve the historical record, nor to draw lessons for future German policymaking on atrocity prevention.

Given this research gap, we applied for and were granted a waiver of the usual thirty-year embargo period for 40 relevant volumes from the Federal Foreign Office's archives. These consisted of documents anywhere between a few pages and an entire binder.[8] The records that we were able to study primarily provide insights into the communication that took place between the German Embassy in Kigali and the Foreign Office headquarters in Bonn in 1993, as well as into the communication between the Foreign Office in Bonn and the German permanent representation at the United Nations in New York between January and July 1994. In addition, for this analysis, five German and international eyewitnesses were interviewed or provided written statements – in almost all cases, for the first time – regarding their recollections of the German role in Rwanda at the time of the genocide.

Based on these sources – and taking into account their limitations – this study can only make an initial and narrow contribution to the necessary broader examination of the German role before and during the Rwandan genocide. Regarding the most relevant potential lessons for contemporary German foreign policy, we focused on a few key themes: (1) early warning, (2) inter-ministerial coordination, and (3) early action. In Chapter 2, the new insights from the Foreign Office records are presented and explained in relation to these three main themes. Chapter 3 summarizes lessons that could have been learned from German foreign policy during the Rwandan genocide and raises questions that, from our perspective, should still be more thoroughly discussed today.

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3 Concerning the partnership between the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda, see Brockmeier 2014, 5–6, 16. On the work of the German political foundations, see Wolff and Mehler 1999, 69, 74–75, 90, 93–94. On the Bundeswehr advisory group, see Johnson, Schlindwein, and Schmolze 2016, 74; Frenzel 2011, 80–82; Frenzel 2014; Dallaire 2005, 90.

4 Des Forges 1999, 95; Melvern 2000, 52; Melvern 2006, 122. In French: *Front Patriotique Rwandais* (FPR).

5 German Bundestag 2019.

6 Brockmeier 2014.

7 These expert reports were ultimately published upon request under the Freedom of Information Act in 2016 (*Informationsfreiheitsgesetz*; IFG). Wolff and Mehler 1998; Wolff and Mehler 1999.

8 The analyzed documents primarily include records from the German Embassy in Kigali and the "East Africa, Zaire" division from 1993, as well as documents related to humanitarian aid and the United Nations division (at the time Division 230) of the Federal Foreign Office from the months of April to December 1994. The appendix provides additional details and a complete list of the reviewed volumes and their order numbers at the Political Archive, along with other primary sources.

New Insights From the Archives of the German Federal Foreign Office

The history and preparation of the genocide against Rwanda's Tutsi have been extensively studied and remain controversial to this day.[9] According to the existing analyses, key structural factors that led to the genocide included the dire economic situation in Rwanda, a high population density, the long history of ethnic tensions between the majority group of the Hutu and the minority group of the Tutsi, as well as rivalries within the country's Hutu elite.[10] On October 1, 1990, the RPF, an exile army mainly composed of Rwandan Tutsi who had originally fled to Uganda to seek refuge from widespread pogroms that took place around 1960, invaded Rwanda and initiated a civil war with the Rwandan Armed Forces. The ensuing civil war would shape the societal and political climate in Rwanda for the next three and a half years, particularly in the northern part of the country.[11] During the war, state authorities increasingly orchestrated attacks and massacres against the Tutsi population. An inquiry of human rights organizations under the umbrella of the *Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme* (FIDH) documented severe human rights violations in Rwanda as early as March 1993 and warned of further atrocities.[12] The introduction of a multi-party system in June 1991 brought political rivalries within the country's elite into the public sphere.[13]

From October 1990, various African heads of state sought to resolve the conflict between the RPF and the Rwandan government.[14] In July 1992, the parties agreed to a ceasefire and on August 4, 1993, they reached a peace agreement, the Arusha Accords. In the agreement, the RPF and the Rwandan government led by President Juvénal Habyarimana – who had been in power since 1973 – agreed to form a transitional government that was supposed to be made up of the RPF, Habyarimana's party, and a number of opposition parties. The accords also covered reforms regarding the rule of law, the reintegration of displaced Rwandans, and the integration of the two armed forces.[15] A UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), was tasked with monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement. Mandated by the UN Security Council in October 1993, UNAMIR struggled with insufficient troops and inadequate resources from the outset.[16]

Until the beginning of the genocide, the formation of the transitional government was delayed repeatedly by partisan struggles for ministerial positions and fights regarding the involvement of the extremist "Hutu Power" party *Coalition pour la Défense de la République* (CDR).[17] On the evening of April 6, 1994, the plane of the Rwandan president was shot down. That same night, the Rwandan military, the presidential guard, and extremist Hutu militias began to systematically murder opposition figures and moderate government officials. At the same time, the civil war between government forces and the RPF reignited. Foreign

9 Among others, see Prunier 1995; Des Forges 1999; Melvern 2000; Melvern 2006; Guichaoua 2015.

10 Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda 1996; Wolff and Mehler 1999; Guichaoua 2015.

11 Straus 2008, 24, 124; Fujii 2009, 77, 83, 89; Hankel 2016, 87–94.

12 FIDH et al. 1993, 49; Des Forges 1999, 93–95.

13 Des Forges 1999, 52–54; Straus 2008, 24–25.

14 Rawson 2018, 25.

15 United Nations 1992; United Nations 1993a; United Nations 1993b; United Nations 1993c; United Nations 1993d.

16 S/RES/872 (1993). See Barnett 2003, 74–96; Dallaire 2005, 80–220; Salton 2017, 55–75.

17 Melvern 2006, 105–106, 120–123; Rawson 2018, 221–224.

embassies initially focused on evacuating their own citizens. Just two weeks later, on April 19, 1994, Human Rights Watch already reported 100,000 deaths in Rwanda.[18] On April 21, instead of upping UNAMIR's troop count and empowering the mission to protect civilians – as its then-commander Roméo Dallaire had proposed – the member states of the UN Security Council decided to reduce the mandated number of troops from its original 2,000 to only 270 soldiers. One month later, on May 17, the Council changed course again and mandated an increase to 5,500 soldiers.[19] In the following weeks, however, neither enough troops nor sufficient equipment ever arrived in Rwanda. Within 100 days, approximately 800,000 Rwandans, predominantly Tutsi but also politically moderate Hutu as well as Twa, were murdered by local officials, soldiers, ordinary citizens, and "Hutu Power" party militias (*Interahamwe* and *Impuzamugambi*).[20] The killing was ultimately brought to an end when the RPF won the civil war in July 1994.

Against this backdrop, we set out to investigate what information was available to German foreign policymakers regarding the situation in Rwanda before the genocide, and which policy options German authorities considered in response – and why.

Early Warning and Political Analysis in German Diplomacy Before the Genocide

Previous analyses of German policies before the genocide concluded that the German embassy in Kigali overlooked clear warning signs or failed to communicate them to the Foreign Office headquarters in Bonn.[21] Our analysis of the Foreign Office records we examined for this research confirms many of these previous findings, but it also paints a somewhat more nuanced picture of the knowledge that was available in the Kigali embassy as well as in Bonn before the genocide.

First, the Foreign Office records show that from the perspective of employees of the GTZ (Germany's main development agency, today called GIZ) in Rwanda in 1993, the German Embassy downplayed the security situation for the approximately 350 Germans that were present in the country[22] – and thereby indirectly also the security situation for the local population.[23] Diplomats at headquarters in Bonn also harbored doubts about the embassy's assessments. In early February 1993, the East Africa/Zaire division noted: "Based on the available information, including from our European partners, especially Belgium, we must assume that the representation in Kigali tends to downplay the security situation in Rwanda."[24] However, the records do not indicate any consequences that resulted from this assessment at headquarters.

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18 Süddeutsche Zeitung 1994a.

19 S/RES/912 (1994); S/1994/470; S/RES/918 (1994).

20 Straus 2008, 113–118; Fujii 2009, 170–174; Hankel 2016, 222–229. The *Interahamwe* ("those who work together") was the youth organization and militia of the ruling party MRND (Mouvement Républicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement), while the *Impuzamugambi* ("those with the same goal") were affiliated with the CDR. Guichaoua 2015, 126–130, 407–408.

21 See, e.g., Wolff and Mehler 1999, 63; Peltner 2013, 14; Brockmeier 2014, 9–10.

22 GTZ stood for "Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit". Today, the agency is called "Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit" (GIZ). 180 Germans lived in Kigali in 1993; 14.06.1993, No. 162, Order No. 160118. 0521. Germans were the third largest group of Western nationals in Rwanda, after Belgium (1500 persons, 900 of whom lived in Kigali) and France (600), and before the US (200 indviduals). Sénat de Belgique 1997, 199.

23 15.01.1993, No. 5, Order No. 160118. 0503–0505. 13.05.1993, Report No. 212/93, Order No. 249113. 2477, 2479, 2483–2484.

24 05.02.1993, "Elements for a note from [Director for Africa Policy] to Ambassador Dieter Hölscher," Order No. 160118. 0902–0903. This and all following quotes from the records have been translated from German by the authors.

Second, the records generally show that the Foreign Office – both the embassy and headquarters in Bonn – had a somewhat more nuanced assessment of the situation than previously assumed. In their study for the German development ministry and based on the records available to them at the time, Wolff and Mehler concluded that the embassy had first used the term "Interahamwe" as late as April 1994. In contrast to this finding, the Foreign Office records reviewed for this study already include the term as early as January 1993.[25] Other descriptions of the Interahamwe that were also used by contemporary NGO reports can be found in the records, too.[26] The embassy's assessments in 1993 repeatedly demonstrate that the embassy was at least aware of the basic tenets of the conflict, including the influence of ethnicity, regional rivalries, and organized political violence.[27] That said, at the turn of 1993/1994, the willingness to use violence was limited to a relatively small part of the population and most prevalent in Rwanda's civil war-affected North.[28] The Foreign Office headquarters in Bonn also received key reports on Rwanda from major human rights organizations. For example, the examined records include copies and discussions of publicly available "Urgent Action" reports by Amnesty International that explicitly describe the targeted persecution of Tutsi in the form of identity checks followed by murders, as well as the disappearance of figures of the political opposition in the first half of 1993.[29]

Despite the available information, both the embassy and German diplomats at headquarters failed to recognize the degree to which the violence in Rwanda was organized and planned.

Even the more conflict-sensitive German aid workers that were present in Rwanda at the time did not foresee the eventual extent and intensity of the killing.[30] Yet the records show that despite the available information, both the embassy and German diplomats at headquarters failed to recognize the fact that the violence was orchestrated by state actors, the degree to which it was organized and planned, and the specifically ethnic dimension of the violence in Rwanda (i.e., the targeted persecution of Tutsi) in 1993 – despite the existence of numerous detailed Rwandan and international reports on these very topics.[31]

There are other studies that dig deeper into the explanations for these failures of political analysis, for example, the abovementioned studies by Wolff and Mehler. Those explanations include conflicts between the Foreign Office headquarters, the embassy in Kigali, and the German development ministry; a selective intake of information to avoid disrupting the image of Rwanda as a "donor darling"; as well as the interests of the diplomats in Kigali to avoid alarmism and irritating their Rwandan counterparts. Internationally, due to the lack of overarching and "hard" German security or economic interests, there was a tendency by Germany's diplomats to simply follow the policies of Western partners – especially France – in order to avoid isolation and diplomatic conflicts.[32] Moreover, between 1991 and 1993, there was a certain optimism and hope among international observers that the Arusha process would lead to a positive outcome and bring peace to the country.[33] This optimism

25 Wolff and Mehler 1999, 63; see, e.g., Peltner 2013, 14; Brockmeier 2014, 9–10. 29.01.1993, Report No. 53/93, Order No. 160118. 0649–0651.

26 14.01.1993. No. 8, Order No. 160118. 0503. 22.01.1993, Report No. 14/93, Order No. 160117. 0218. 26.01.1993, "The Ambassador of the Federal Republic to [GTZ security officer]." 0506–0507. 29.01.1993, Report No. 53/93, Order No. 160118. 0649–0651. 13.05.1993, Urgent Action 152/93, Order No. 160122. 1632–1633. Human Rights Watch 1993.

27 See, e.g., 10.03.1993, No. 77, Order No. 160117. 0233. 23.08.1993, No. 225, Order No. 160117. 0253. 27.09.1993, Report No. 408/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 4. 0369–0382.

28 Hankel 2016, 221–222.

29 18.02.1993, Urgent Action 41/93, Order No. 160122. 1576–1578. 24.02.1993, Urgent Action 43/93, Order No. 160122. 1585–1586.

30 Spiegel Online 2004.

31 Wolff and Mehler 1999, 59–60; Grünfeld and Huijboom 2007, 69–73.

32 Wolff and Mehler 1999, 48–55.

33 Asche 1995, 17; Rawson 2018, 81–82, 160, 181, 271 n47, 294 n8; Leader 2020, 87, 211, 220.

was less pronounced among the Rwandan population,[34] although by the turn of 1993/1994, the majority of Rwandans were perhaps open to cooperation between ethnic groups.[35] In addition to these factors, our review of the Foreign Office's archival records suggests another possible explanation for the poor political analysis: the staffing of the German embassy. In January 1993, the embassy had seven staff members deployed from Bonn, and only two of those individuals were responsible for political work: Ambassador Dieter Hölscher, who was on his final posting before retirement,[36] and his deputy, for whom Kigali was the first assignment abroad.[37]

The following four examples illustrate the shortcomings in the political analysis by Germany's diplomats in Kigali and Bonn at the time.

First, although it regularly reported on the activities of the Interahamwe, the embassy's semi-annual political reports do not mention these groups and the threats they posed.[38] While technically correct, the embassy's repeated description of the Interahamwe as "youth groups" (rather than as "militias," as reports by other embassies and human rights organizations described them, see above) suggests that these groups were underestimated by the German diplomats. The organized violence against Tutsi in the country, as described in the semi-annual reports, is not explicitly linked to the Interahamwe but is at most described as incited by MRND and CDR.[39]

Second, there were significant discrepancies between the findings put forward in various reports by human rights NGOs and the reporting of the embassy.[40] Despite detailed human rights reporting and Rwandan newspaper articles in the first half of 1993 that documented the widespread rape of women by the Rwandan army, the embassy stated in June 1993 that "[g]ender-specific human rights violations (...) are not discernible in Rwanda."[41] The systematic persecution of Rwandan human rights activists was also underestimated by the embassy. In the semi-annual reports in April and September 1993, the embassy noted that Rwandan human rights organizations were "not subject to any restrictions."[42] This contradicts two "Urgent Action" reports by Amnesty International that described threats by state authorities to informants of the International Human Rights Commission and to Rwandan human rights activists.[43] Records on asylum issues and political persecution from June 1993 also show that the Foreign Office essentially ruled out any state-led political persecution of the Tutsi: "According to the information available to the Foreign Office, a state persecution of certain groups cannot be confirmed."[44] Furthermore, the diplomats wrote, "[t]he ethnic minority of the Tutsi is more endangered, but less by active measures of state

34 Leader 2020, 226–227.

35 Hankel 2016, 221–222.

36 Peltner 2013, 22–23.

37 20.09.1993, Report No. 376/93, Order No. 160118. 0525–0526.

38 "Politische Halbjahresberichte" in German; these are a key source of regular substantive reporting on political developments. 27.09.1993, Report No. 408/93, Order No. 160117, pp. 3–4. 0369–0382.

39 30.04.1993, Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 2. 0339–0352. Until the introduction of a multiparty system in 1991, the ruling party of President Juvénal Habyarimana was named "Mouvement Révolutionaire National pour le Développement" (MRND). Afterwards, it was renamed "Mouvement Républicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement" (MRNDD). Nevertheless, the abbreviation "MRND" continued to be commonly used.

40 See also Wolff and Mehler 1999, 59.

41 FIDH et al. 1993, 31, 36–37, 55, 58–59; Human Rights Watch 1993, 11. 20.06.1993, 514–516.80/3, Order No. 320257, pg. 6. 2147–2153.

42 30.04.1993, Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117. 0339–0352.; 27.09.1993, Report No. 408/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 3. 0369–0382.

43 08.02.1993, Urgent Action 30/93, Order No. 160122. 1574–1575. 13.05.1993, Urgent Action 152/93, Order No. 160122. 1632–1633.

44 20.06.1993, 514–516.80/3, Order No. 320257, pg. 4. 2147–2153.

actors, and more by members of the civilian population due to inadequate state protection."[45] This internal assessment was issued by the Foreign Office three months after the publication of the FIDH report in March 1993, which described ethnic violence, massacres, and the murder of more than 2000 people – most of them Tutsi. The FIDH report had explicitly discussed these atrocities as on the threshold to genocide and pointed to state security forces and close allies of President Habyarimana as being responsible for them.[46] When Habyarimana and his government responded by rejecting any connection of death squads to state authorities, the German embassy described this denial as "credible and balanced."[47]

Third, the German Embassy in Kigali either did not notice the activities of influential Rwandan hate media in 1993 or did not deem them important enough to report on them. Other embassies and Germans working in Rwanda at the time did note these developments. The magazine *Kangura* ("Wake Them Up") was published from May 1990 onward, held a prominent position among pro-MRND and pro-CDR print media, and was considered "the first and most virulent voice of hatred" in the country.[48] Already several years before the genocide, the magazine regularly published ethnically incendiary propaganda in increasingly extremist tones, such as the "Ten Hutu Commandments" published in December 1990.[49] In his letters sent to interested parishioners, friends, and relatives back in Germany, pastor Jörg Zimmermann described the omnipresence of Kangura on the streets of Rwanda, specifically mentioning the "Ten Commandments" in August 1991 as a "sad example" of the exceptionally aggressive media climate in Rwanda.[50] The French ambassador also reported on Kangura as an outlet of "extremist Hutu ideology" as early as December 1990.[51] The infamous radio station *Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines* (RTLM) was founded on April 8, 1993[52] and later became a central mobilization tool for the genocide. In late October 1993, the US embassy reported on RTLM, and the first two cables UN force commander Roméo Dallaire sent from Kigali in late October 1993 mentioned the station and the disinformation its *animateurs* and *animatrices* were spreading.[53] The Belgian ambassador also later recalled that he recognized the harmful effect of the station in late 1993.[54] Still, none of the five lists on "important" media organizations that were included in the reviewed Foreign Office records included Kangura, RTLM, or other relevant hate media. The reports also do not note the radicalized media landscape writ large.[55] Instead, in 1993, the German ambassador in Kigali (who also served as the embassy's press officer[56]) described an "increasingly lively" press landscape with "new publications with low circulation and a widely varying orientation and quality."[57]

None of the five lists on "important" media organizations that were included in the reviewed Foreign Office records included Kangura, RTLM, or other relevant hate media.

45 20.06.1993, 514–516.80/3, Order No. 320257, pg. 6. 2147–2153. See also Wolff and Mehler 1999, 53 regarding the shifting of blame onto "elements of the security forces not controlled by the government."

46 FIDH et al. 1993, 49–51.

47 13.04.1993. Report No. 165/93, Order No. 160122. 1614, 1615-1621.

48 Higiro 2007, 74; Nowrojee 2007, 365.

49 Melvern 2006, 49–51; Kabanda 2007, 62; Higiro 2007, 83; Grünfeld and Huijboom 2007, 26 n26.

50 13.08.1991: Newsletter No. 1, Jörg Zimmermann. 081. 15.02.1994: Newsletter No. 9, Jörg Zimmermann, pg. 2. 020. It should be noted that Jörg Zimmermann was/is proficient in Kinyarwanda.

51 19.12.1990: Rapport commun des ambassadeurs residents de la CEE. 026. See also Cohen 2007, 35-37.

52 ICTR 1999.

53 25.10.1993: Kigali 03854. C05517270. 25.10.1993: UNAMIR Situation Report 1. National Security Archive Document 19931025w1. 28.10.1993: UNAMIR Situation Report 2. National Security Archive Document 19931028w2. See also Klinghoffer 1998, 37; Des Forges 2007, 45.

54 Sénat de Belgique 1997, 592.

55 These reports were one "informationspolitischer Jahresbericht" (1992; annual media report), two "Länderaufzeichnungen" (1993; country notes), and two "politische Halbjahresberichte" (1993; semi-annual political reports, see n38).

56 08.06.1993: Report No. 238/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 6. 0206–0214.

57 30.04.1993: Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 11. 0339–0352. 27.09.1993: Report No. 408/93, Order No. 160117, pp. 10–11. 0369–0382. 01.03.1993: Report No. 104/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 3. 0316–0338. 02.09.1993: Report No. 366/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 3. 0353–0368.

A fourth example for the grave misjudgments on the part of both the embassy in Kigali and headquarters in Bonn is the diplomats' assessment of the extremist party CDR in September 1993. In late August 1993, two of CDR's three founders personally set out to find a "sister party" in Germany. This episode is captured by Foreign Office cables in response to a request from a staff member of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) to the Foreign Office.[58] In its statement, the embassy in Kigali described the CDR as "outside the developments toward democratic structures." It did so even though it was well-documented at the time (for example, by Human Rights Watch) that the CDR and its militia *Impuzamugambi* were responsible for the murders of about 300 Tutsis.[59] The embassy itself had previously reported that the party spread disinformation and violence, was responsible for massacres, and could trigger "civil war-like unrest."[60] Yet the ambassador did not explicitly warn against collaborating with the CDR. Instead, he provided an assessment of where the CDR might be found on the spectrum of German political parties.[61] Overall, this exchange indicates that the embassy and headquarters not only underestimated the extremist nature of the party but also were not informed about ongoing activities of "Hutu Power" actors within Germany.[62] (There is no information in the available records regarding the apparent rejection of Ferdinand Nahimana – who would later become Rwanda's "propaganda chief" – as Rwanda's ambassador in Bonn by the German government,[63] which would have been an unusual diplomatic measure.)

Inter-Ministerial Coordination and Strategic Capacity

That both the German embassy and the foreign ministry's headquarters underestimated the degree to which the violence in 1993 was organized as well as the willingness within parts of President Habyarimana's inner circle to use violence is also evident in debates regarding German development cooperation and on the Bundeswehr advisory group in Rwanda at the time. The archival records show that there was a lack of even modest coordination between the relevant ministries in order to come up with a joint approach in Rwanda. There is no indication in any of the reviewed documents that there was a joint meeting between the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Federal Ministry of Defense to discuss an adjustment of the overall German engagement in Rwanda – not directly after the signing of the Arusha Accords, nor as the agreement's implementation continued to be delayed by Habyarimana and his inner circle.[64] While the German government debated conditioning German development aid and an end of military cooperation with the Rwandan army in 1993, it did not do so in the context of a shared political strategy – for example, to exert pressure on Rwandan parties to establish the transitional government.[65]

After the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement in August 1993, the development ministry and the Foreign Office, including the embassy in Kigali, apparently did agree that the

58 17.09.1993, Az. 322–320.03 RUA, Order No. 160117. 0261.

59 Human Rights Watch 1993.

60 30.04.1993, Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 2. 0339–0352.: 02.07.1993, Report No. 270/93, Order No. 160117. 0437–0438.: 11.01.1993, No. 4, Order No. 160118. 0499–0500.

61 21.09.1993, No. 249, Order No. 160117. 0269–0270. 22.09.1993, Az. 322–320.03 RUA, Order No. 160117. 0271–0273.

62 Such as the extensive contributions of one of the CDR's founders to Kangura that were linked to an address in Frankfurt am Main in the publication, and his depiction on the magazine's front page. 02/1992, Kangura No. 31, pp. 7–9. 02/1992, Kangura No. 32, pp. 4–8, 10–14. See also Johnson, Schlindwein and Schmolze 2016, 111, 116–117.

63 Prunier 1995, 162 fn5; Des Forges 1999, 68, 71; ICTR 2001, 238–239.

64 Guichaoua 2015, 105–106; Leader 2020, 226–227.

65 See Uvin 1998, 236–238 for a cross-country comparison; and especially Wolff and Mehler 1998; Wolff and Mehler 1999 regarding German development aid.

portfolio of German development cooperation in Rwanda needed to be adjusted in the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations that were scheduled for early November 1993. However, the development ministry and the embassy disagreed on the priorities for this adjustment. Until September 1993, the embassy was primarily focused on establishing the reduction of population growth ("limiting births" as the embassy put it in reports) as a main focus of German-Rwandan development cooperation.[66] In its semi-annual political report to headquarters in September 1993, the embassy did not mention the goal of ethnic reconciliation, nor did it suggest making German aid dependent on an improved human rights record or on the implementation of the peace agreement.[67] However, starting in September 1993, the Foreign Office headquarters did support the use of development funds to (re-)integrate the armed forces.[68] The development ministry, for its part, conducted an internal assessment of such a use of funds.[69]

The records from September 1993 also show a lack of overall coordination between the Foreign Office and the development ministry regarding development cooperation with Rwanda. In September, the latter decided to reallocate 10 million Deutsche Mark of remaining funds for Rwanda to programs in Burundi, citing the political situation in Rwanda – and apparently without consulting the Foreign Office.[70]

In the reviewed Foreign Office records, the question of exerting pressure on the Habyarimana government by conditioning development aid only comes up once: In February 1993, diplomats discussed it in the context of reports on the resurgence of the civil war between the Rwandan army and the RPF in the country's north. Belgium, for instance, had proposed to examine whether development funds should be contingent on the human rights situation in the country. However, the German embassy shared the opinion of the US that a suspension of aid followed by an eventual resumption would be costly, and that uninterrupted aid would be better for Rwanda in any case.[71]

After the establishment of the transitional government was delayed in the fall of 1993, Rwandan–German government negotiations on development cooperation appear to have been initially rescheduled for early March 1994. The available Foreign Office records suggest that only then (in March 1994) German authorities explicitly intended to use Germany's development aid as a means to exert pressure on the Rwandan government and the RPF. On March 3, 1994, the East Africa/Zaire division at the Foreign Office asked the embassy to convey to the government as well as the RPF that a "deepening" of German development cooperation would only be considered after the implementation of the Arusha agreement.[72] (The German ambassador simply responded that a visit by a delegation of the development ministry for consultations would not make sense in any case, as the Rwandan government was not functional.)[73] One week before the start of the genocide, the embassy in Kigali reported to Bonn that the Rwandan government had been informed that the German government

66 27.09.1993, Report No. 408/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 11. 0369–0382. Regarding population growth, a cable summarizing a trip by German members of parliament in 1993 includes a paragraph reflecting the attitude of both the ambassador and the parliamentarians toward their Rwandan counterparts. It is one example of perhaps colonial attitudes that can also be found in other parts of the records: "The delegation rightly pointed to 'Chinese solutions' when talking to the President and suggested that, for example, no one with more than three children should hold public office. (The president himself is the father of eight children.)" 11.08.1993, No. 216, Order No. 188945, 2532.

67 30.04.1993, Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117. 0339–0352.; 27.09.1993, Report No. 408/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 3. 0369–0382.

68 01.09.1993, Az.: 322-440.00 RUA-RV 010912, Order No. 188945. 2552–2553.

69 09.11.1993, Az.: 322-380.00 RUA, Order No. 160120. 1443–1444.

70 10.09.1993, Az.: 322-440.00 RUA, Order No. 188945. 2555.

71 12.02.1994, No. 44, Order No. 160118. 0953–0954.

72 On or after 03.03.1994, "Development cooperation with Rwanda," Order No. 188945. 2567.

73 11.03.1994, No. 45, Order No. 188945. 2569–2570.

rejected negotiations, and it would therefore be difficult to continue German development cooperation.[74]

Another example for a significantly delayed understanding of the dangerous situation in Rwanda and a lack of coordination between relevant ministries is the question of the withdrawal of the group of military advisors deployed by the Bundeswehr, which had been stationed in Kigali since 1978. In 1993, this group was made up of six individuals.[75] In their evaluation on German development cooperation at the time of the genocide, Wolff and Mehler criticized that the advisory group had stayed in the country until April 1994, even though it had reported that its own vehicles had been "borrowed" and used in the preparation of pogroms.[76]

The available records only contain one exchange on a possible withdrawal of the Bundeswehr advisors:[77] as the civil war intensified in February 1993, the Foreign Office headquarters asked the embassy not to sign an at this point apparently overdue agreement on sending more equipment assistance to the Rwandan Armed Forces. At the same time, Bonn asked the embassy for an opinion on whether the Bundeswehr advisors should stay in Rwanda in the event of a further escalation of violence in the country. Headquarters itself advocated for the withdrawal of the advisors if an escalation were to occur.[78] The embassy responded with a lengthy plea against withdrawing the advisors. According to the embassy, the situation in Rwanda had calmed down, and a withdrawal would send the "wrong signal" given the "important tasks" of the advisory group. In addition to the training of mechanics, the embassy pointed out, the group provided a "very valuable pre-selection of candidates" for courses taught at the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College in Hamburg.[79]

The embassy also argued that the military advisors gathered useful information from Rwandan military circles. Furthermore, it identified a "democratic influence by the [German] military on the [Rwandan] military" and an "indispensable contribution" to Rwanda's democratization. Even though the Rwandan army made a bad impression, the Bundeswehr advisory group, according to the German embassy, contributed to its overall improvement.

The Bundeswehr advisors ultimately only left Rwanda in April 1994, shortly after the start of the genocide.

In addition to these tasks, the German advisors, according to the embassy's assessment, could also help in case of an evacuation, thus reassuring the Germans in the country. The embassy's argument also referred to the French ambassador, who was reported to have considered the work of the German advisors pertinent.[80] The embassy further argued that a withdrawal could be interpreted politically as "Germany unilaterally taking sides for the RPF," which would, in turn, affect German development cooperation, as "German civilians should not remain where German soldiers are withdrawn due to an alleged crisis." The embassy also brought up a basic geopolitical argument, stating that the withdrawal of the advisory group would signal to other African states that the repeatedly emphasized "solidarity and development partnership" with Africa was in question – considering the "obvious shift of German interests to [Eastern Europe]."[81]

74 31.03.1994, No. 62, Order No. 188945. 2571.

75 Johnson, Schlindwein and Schmolze 2016, 74; Frenzel 2014. 30.04.1993, Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 8. 0339–0352.

76 Wolff and Mehler 1999, 87, 104.

77 It should be noted here that the records provide neither a comprehensive insight into the East Africa/Zaire division activities of the German Foreign Office for the months of January to April 1994 nor an insight into the documents of the Federal Ministry of Defense (BMVg) (see the introduction and appendix).

78 24.02.1993, Az.: 300-440-70 RUA, Order No. 160118. 1006–1007.

79 "Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr." Among others, Tharcisse Renzaho, the later prefect of Kigali, participated in such a training in the mid-1980s; Frenzel 2011, 80–82; Frenzel 2014. Renzaho received a life sentence from the ICTR (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda), including on charges of genocide and rape as crimes against humanity.

80 08.03.1993, No. 73, Order No. 160119. 1069–1071.

81 08.03.1993, No. 73, Order No. 160119. 1069–1071.

The military advisors were not withdrawn. In September 1993, the embassy reported to headquarters that a new agreement for equipment assistance for the Rwandan army had been signed, totaling five million Deutsche Mark for the period 1992 to 1994. The contract included a clause that stipulated that the delivered goods should not be used for any activities that violated human rights.[82] The Bundeswehr advisors ultimately only left Rwanda in April 1994, shortly after the start of the genocide.[83]

Early Action: Political Initiatives and Debates on Germany's Participation in UNAMIR

In at least two other areas, it would have been conceivable for Germany to change course politically before the genocide: First, Bonn could have increased its own political efforts to mediate between the conflict parties. Second, Germany could have participated in and contributed to the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda.

Mediation During the Peace Talks

Although German diplomats considered the Federal Republic to be a more credible political actor in Rwanda than other Western states, between 1992 and 1994 Germany did not actively seek a more significant mediation role in the country. According to the German embassy's assessment at the time, any German engagement in Rwanda would have been particularly welcome, regardless of its nature. The Germans were deemed "the most popular group within the international community."[84] The embassy argued that German development cooperation, as of March 1993, was considered to be "especially transparent and efficient" compared to other donor countries.[85] In the embassy's assessment, Germany was generally seen as more credible than other Western states, especially France: "Germany, as a state without great power claims or Francophone ambitions, does not arouse political mistrust."[86] At the same time, inquiries from headquarters to Kigali and embassy reports indicate that Germany strongly aligned its own political positions with those of France as well as with Belgium and the US. In January 1993, the German embassy described France as the "most important foreign stabilizing factor for Rwanda"[87] – in other words, a stabilizing force for the Habyarimana government.

While German policymakers believed that Germany was a particularly credible actor and argued that other Western governments were perceived as less neutral than Germany, nothing followed from this assessment. Germany's role in the Arusha negotiations was very limited, with the available records indicating neither strategic political ambitions nor increased political efforts by the country throughout the peace process. The German government participated as an observer in the negotiations, alongside Belgium, Burundi, France, Senegal (the country holding the chair of the Organization of African Unity, or OAU, at the time),

82 30.06.1993, Az.: 300-440.70 RUA, Order No. 219732. 2338.

83 Frenzel 2014.

84 08.06.1993, Report No. 238/93, Order No. 160117. 0206–0214.

85 30.04.1993, Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 7. 0339–0352. This point was cut from the September iteration of the report.

86 27.09.1993, Report No. 408/93, Order No. 160117. pg. 7. 0369–0382.

87 15.01.1993, Report No. 24/93, Order No. 160118. 0761.

Uganda, the United States, Zaire, and the United Nations.[88] Germany was primarily invited due to its significant relationship with Rwanda in terms of its development cooperation and its willingness to financially and materially support the military observers of the OAU (the *Groupe d'Observateurs Militaires Neutres*, or GOMN).[89] At the negotiations, Germany was mostly represented by embassy personnel from Dar es Salaam, with occasional absences – similarly to other observers.[90]

In June 1993, Rwandan Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye visited Bonn. Instead of meeting with then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) as originally requested in February, the prime minister spoke to the chancellor's Chief of Staff Friedrich Bohl (CDU) and State Minister Helmut Schäfer (FDP) at the Foreign Office.[91] A briefing for Schäfer mentioned "influencing the country's internal development (democratization, human rights)" as one of the meeting's objectives, along with "respect for human rights as an indispensable prerequisite for cooperation." It also included a reference to "bloody incidents triggered by groups of President Habyarimana's party, in which several hundred people were killed."[92] However, an internal Foreign Office memo on the meeting suggests that these issues were not addressed with such clarity, and that the ethnic dimension of the violence in Rwanda was once again not mentioned.[93] After the signing of the Arusha Accords, none of the reviewed records for 1993 contain any mention of further concrete political mediation attempts by Germany, and nothing on mediation attempts to support the formation of a transitional government.

According to David Rawson, who served as the US ambassador in Rwanda from November 1993 to December 1995 and observed the Arusha negotiations, Germany could have played a more significant role as a mediator. Rawson noted that the Germans were highly respected, and in the exchanges among Western donor countries that were involved in the Arusha negotiations, Germany's role was "as high-ranking and intimate as [that] of France, Belgium, and the USA." He remarked that, overall, the German government "deliberately" remained a politically marginal actor, primarily focusing on its development assistance.[94] Joyce Leader, Rawson's deputy at the time, also does not recall Germany playing a prominent political role in the years before the genocide.[95] Liberata Mulamula, who was a member of the Tanzanian Facilitation Team in Arusha, similarly views Germany's diplomatic contribution to the negotiations as "rather modest."[96] These statements from former diplomats are in line with the academic literature on the subject, in which Germany is rarely mentioned as an independent actor, if it is mentioned at all.[97]

The German government "deliberately" remained a politically marginal actor, primarily focusing on its development assistance.

88 Des Forges 1999, 124; Rawson 2018, 68–69; Leader 2020, 168.

89 Rawson 2018, 72. 30.04.1993, Report No. 192/93, Order No. 160117, pg. 6. 0339–0352. This encompassed 16 vehicles with radio equipment to patrol the border between Rwanda and Uganda.

90 Rawson 2018, 72, 160–161.

91 18.01.1993, 322–321.25 RUA, Order No. 160118. 0553–0554.; 29.01.1993, 322–321.36 RUA, Order No. 160118. 0557.; 03.06.1993, 322–321.36 RUA, Order No. 160118. 0598–0599.

92 11.06.1993, Az. 700-700.10, "Suggested outline for Minister of State Schäfer...," Order No. 160118. pp. 3–4. 0615–0628. This referred to anti-Tutsi pogroms in January 1993.

93 15.06.1993, 322–321.36 RUA 151615, Order No. 160118. 0630–0633.

94 28.12.2019, interview with David Rawson. See also Rawson 2018, xvii.

95 19.05.2020, written statement by Joyce Leader. See also Leader 2020.

96 27.10.2020, written statement by Liberata Mulamula.

97 See, e.g., Prunier 1995, 108; Des Forges 1999, 124, 142, 177, 732; Melvern 2006, 12; Grünfeld and Huijboom 2007, 27.

Participation in UNAMIR

Germany also missed an opportunity for early action just before the genocide with respect to contributing to the UN peacekeeping mission UNAMIR. The mission was deployed to Rwanda in early October 1993 to support the implementation of the Arusha Accords. The Foreign Office supported numerous requests from Rwandan and international actors in which they urged Germany to participate in and contribute to the mission. Before the genocide, such a contribution was prevented by the Federal Ministry of Defense; during the genocide, both the defense ministry and the Federal Ministry of Justice had objections.

Between March and early autumn 1993, both the United Nations and the Rwandan parties to the conflict, including government representatives all the way up to President Habyarimana, repeatedly asked German government officials if Germany would contribute to a potential UN peacekeeping mission to help implement the Arusha Accords.[98] The Polish government also signaled its interest to contribute to the mission together with Germany multiple times – even at the level of the Polish prime minister and the foreign minister.[99] As early as April 1993, the Foreign Office argued that Germany could participate in a UN mission in a similar way to its contribution of a medical unit in Cambodia (to the mission UNTAC).[100] After the signing of the Arusha Accords on August 4, 1993, requests for Germany to contribute to the UN mission in Rwanda became more numerous. Diplomatic cables from the embassy in Kigali and the German mission to the UN in New York demonstrate that German diplomats at both posts shared the assessment that a swift deployment of a UN mission to Rwanda was crucial to support the implementation of the peace agreement, the establishment of transitional government, and to ensure a peaceful development in Rwanda. (An assessment that proved correct in hindsight.) For example, on August 31, 1993, the German ambassador in Kigali summed up the situation as follows: "With each day that the UN peace mission is not deployed in Rwanda, the country loses precious time for the urgent establishment of the government, for reaching critically important new agreements with the World Bank and other donors, rebuilding the economy, and reintegrating people displaced by war and refugees."[101]

In preparation for the adoption of the UNAMIR mandate in September 1993, the UN Secretariat ("urgently") requested the provision of a field hospital from Germany. UN representatives emphasized that a German contingent would be perceived as "neutral and welcome" in Rwanda, which was deemed "important for the credibility of the force."[102] The German mission to the UN, the embassy in Kigali, and the East Africa division in the Foreign Office in Bonn thought that UNAMIR had a good chance to succeed, and they explicitly endorsed a German participation in the mission.[103] The Foreign Office therefore asked the Ministry of Defense about the possibility of deploying a field hospital to Rwanda, pointing to the capacities that were going to become available with the impending end of the UN mission in Cambodia.[104]

98 07.06.1993, No. 175, Order No. 160119. 1269–1270. 11.08.1993, No. 216, Order No. 188945, 2532.

99 28.04.1993, 230-381.47 RUA, Order No. 160119. 1230–1231.

100 28.04.1993, 230-381.47 RUA, Order No. 160119. 1230–1231.

101 31.08.1993, No. 234, Order No. 160120. 1485–1486.

102 10.09.1993, Az.: Pol 381.66, Order No. 160120, 1489–1490. 17.09.1993, Order No. 160120, Az.: Pol 381.66, 1496–1497.

103 16.09.1993, Planned deployment of UN peacekeeping troops to Rwanda, Order No. 160120, 1432–1433. 24.09.1993, No. 2391, Order No. 160120. 1498–1499.

104 22.09.1993, Az.: 230-381.47, Order No. 160120. 1434–1435.

However, precisely on the day the UN Security Council authorized UNAMIR, the German mission to the UN informed the UN Secretariat that Germany would not contribute to the mission. Despite its withdrawal from Cambodia, German policymakers explained, the Bundeswehr did not possess the necessary logistical capacities to contribute. However, the Foreign Office records show that a lack of capacities was not the only reason for the rejection by the Ministry of Defense. Only for the eyes of their colleagues in the German mission in New York, not for transmission to the UN Secretariat, diplomats in Bonn added with reference to then-Defense Minister Volker Rühe (CDU): "[The Defense Ministry] has also informed us that Minister Rühe has decided that the Bundeswehr will not participate in UNAMIR during this legislative period."[105]

Despite repeated objections from German diplomats, this attitude did not change in the following months. The German ambassador in Kigali and the permanent representative in New York argued that the German reservations and the decision by the Ministry of Defense not to contribute to the mission were detrimental to both Germany's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council and its goal to eventually gain a permanent seat.[106] The head of the East Africa division at the Foreign Office continued to favor a German participation in UNAMIR even after the defense ministry's rejection and pointed to the credibility of Germany in the region.[107] Given UNAMIR's obvious difficulties from day one to recruit enough personnel and material, the German ambassador continued to advocate for German support to the mission and emphasized the regret "in high-ranking UN circles" over the ongoing refusal to contribute.[108]

Several months later, after the start of the genocide, internal exchanges at the Foreign Office regarding a German involvement in UNAMIR show that the Foreign Ministry continued to generally favor such a participation and contribution to the mission, while the Ministry of Defense as well as at this point also the Ministry of Justice rejected this course of action.

When the UN Security Council debated reinforcing UNAMIR in late April and early May 1994,[109] the UN once again asked the German government for two contributions: a medical unit of 100 personnel and 50 armored personnel carriers, as well as the provision of a Transall aircraft for relief flights between Nairobi and Kigali.[110] As the German UN ambassador in New York pointed out in a cable to Bonn, the fact that the then-UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Kofi Annan, put in a direct formal request to the German government instead of first using informal channels demonstrated the urgency of the ask.[111]

Once again, the Foreign Office strongly supported heeding the UN's request while anticipating resistance from the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Finance (BMF), and the Ministry of Justice (BMJ): an internal Foreign Office briefing for then-Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel (FDP) suggested that the minister should aim to "achieve a decision by the federal government against the foreseeable resistance of the Ministry of Defense and possibly other ministries (BMF, BMJ)." The Foreign Office proposed to – at a minimum – send the requested medical unit. It argued that this would be a purely humanitarian mission and that concerns regarding

105 S/RES/872 (1993). 06.10.1993, Az. 230–381.47 RUA, Order No. 160120, 1523–1524.

106 15.10.1993, No. 274, Order No. 160120. 1539–1540. 14.10.1993, No. 2691, Order No. 160120, 1542–1543. Germany was a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1995 and 1996 calendar years, i.e., was elected to a seat in 1994.

107 09.11.1993, Az.: 322-380.00, Order No. 160120. 1443–1444.

108 15.11.1993, No. 315, Order No. 160120. 1552–1554.

109 S/RES/918 (1994).

110 14.05.1994, No. 1508, Order No. 219732. 2382–2383. 18.05.1994, Az.: 230-381.47 RUA "Suggested outline for the cabinet meeting on 19.05.1994," Order No. 192393, S. 3. 2009–2012.

111 14.05.1994, No. 1508, Order No. 219732. 2382–2383.

its constitutionality should therefore not apply. Furthermore, the diplomats pointed to both an "expectation among the German public," including initiatives in the Bundestag and the state government of Rhineland-Palatinate, and the considerable time pressure resulting from a necessary involvement of the Bundestag.[112]

Despite these clear efforts on the part of the Foreign Office, contemporary media reports indicate that Foreign Minister Kinkel and Defense Minister Rühe could only agree on contributing the requested relief flights.[113] In talking points for Kinkel for a cabinet meeting that took place on May 19, the rejection of more extensive contributions was justified by the situation in Rwanda. The talking points refer to the joint opinion of Rühe and Kinkel that the "political" situation in Rwanda and the unclear mandate of UNAMIR prevented a successful and more extensive German participation.[114] On the same day, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* described the conflict between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense in clearer terms: Rühe had rejected a Bundeswehr deployment due to the pending ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court. In addition, according to "military circles" cited in the paper, "German interests regarding a deployment in Rwanda are not apparent."[115]

According to "military circles" cited in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, German interests regarding a deployment in Rwanda were "not apparent."

The ministers' compromise – humanitarian relief flights – sparked a debate about the exact form that German participation in the UN mission should take. The UN Secretariat had asked the German government for support in the form of a C-160 Transall aircraft to conduct daily air lifts from Nairobi to Kigali.[116] Following the agreement between Kinkel and Rühe, on May 18, the Foreign Office informed the UN Secretariat that Germany would carry out the relief flights under two conditions: that the parties to the civil war agreed and that the security situation at Kigali Airport allowed for the flights.[117]

Although there were no clear objections in the Bundestag,[118] there were now concerns at the Ministry of Justice. Contrary to the assessment of the international law division at the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Justice viewed the proposed form of logistical support as part of a military operation.[119] The UN Secretariat rejected any restrictions on the goods or persons what would be transported by the aircraft, emphasizing the need for a flexible, unconditional use of the transport plane.[120] The Ministry of Justice further argued that deploying the aircraft shortly before the decision of the Federal Constitutional Court on "out of area" missions by the Bundeswehr in July 1994 could limit the government's room for maneuver in the future. At the time, the ministry anticipated that the court would demand parliamentary approval for any international deployments and warned that the use of the Transall aircraft would lead to even stricter requirements of parliamentary approval. With reference to the federal minister of justice at the time, the Foreign Office noted internally: "[T]he Foreign Office alone would be held responsible for this; Minister [Sabine] Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger [FDP] considers it wiser to wait for the decision of the Federal Constitutional Court."[121] In

112 16.05.1994, Az.: 230-381.47 "Situation in Rwanda," Order No. 001469. 5963–5965.

113 Süddeutsche Zeitung 1994b.

114 18.05.1994, Az.: 230-381.47 RUA "Suggested outline for the cabinet meeting on 19.05.1994," Order No. 192393, pg. 3. 2009–2012.

115 Süddeutsche Zeitung 1994b.

116 18.05.1994, No. 1552, Order No. 192447. 1739.

117 18.05.1994, Az.: 230-381.47 RUA "Suggested outline for the cabinet meeting on 19.05.1994," Order No. 192393, pg. 3. 2009–2012.

118 24.05.1994, Az.: 230.381.50-2 SB "Subject: Air transport aid," Order No. 001469. 5976–5977.

119 19.05.1994, Az.: 500-503.01 "Re: Your request for legal assessment," Order No. 001469. 5970–5973.

120 21.05.1994, No. 1599, Order No. 219723, 2399–2401.

121 25.05.1994, Az.: 500-503.01. "Re: Air transport aid by the Luftwaffe for Rwanda," Order No. 001469. 5978–5979.

this second controversy, Kinkel was confident and apparently indicated to Gerhard Baum (an FDP colleague and at the time the head of the German delegation at the UN Human Rights Commission) that he would prevail over his party colleague Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger.[122] The reviewed records do not show any involvement of or coordinating role by the chancellery in the dispute between the ministries.

The available records also do not contain a full explanation on why the deployment of the transport aircraft kept being delayed. From late May onward, the German mission to the UN regularly pointed out that, despite some risks, the security situation at Kigali Airport allowed for transport flights and that the UN Secretariat and the Canadian mission to the UN urgently requested support. According to the German diplomats at the UN, after Germany had committed to contributing the aircraft in mid-May, "sympathy for the difficulties of the German decision-making processes" was now wearing thin on the part of the UN and Canada.[123] A week later, the German mission reported that South Africa was now providing 50 armored personnel carriers and a field hospital, thus contributing "exactly the assistance" that "the UN Secretariat had previously requested from us and that we could not provide in this case."[124] Kofi Annan's deputy, Iqbal Riza, also expressed regret over the ongoing delays in remarks to the German mission.[125]

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The German transport aircraft was finally dispatched on July 18, 1994. At this point, the genocide in Rwanda had already ended.

122 26.05.1994, Az.: 500-503.01 "Subject: Air transport aid," Order No. 001469. 5980.

123 18.05.1994, No. 1552, Order No. 192447. 1740–1742. 18.05.1994, No. 1548, Order No. 219732. 2389–2391. 01.06.1994, No. 1701, Order No. 192447. 1774–1775.

124 08.06.1994, No. 1744, Order No. 219733. 2284–2286.

125 08.06.1994, No. 1752, Order No. 219733, 2280–2283.

Addressing Remaining Deficits: Early Warning, Strategic Capacity, and Early Action

The glaring failure of the international community during the genocide in Rwanda raised the question how genocide and crimes against humanity could be prevented in the future. Thirty years later, this question remains relevant with regard to mass atrocities around the world. The question is particularly relevant for Germany. In its 2017 guidelines *Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace,* the German government stated:

> "Germany has accepted the unique responsibility arising from its history. The avoidance of war and violence in international relations, the prevention of genocide and severe violations of human rights, and the defence of endangered minorities and the victims of oppression and persecution are integral to Germany's reason of state."[126]

Foreign Office records on German policy before and during the genocide in Rwanda suggest that a closer examination of Germany's policies at the time could have pointed to some important lessons on early warning and peacebuilding. However, these lessons could still be learned. German foreign policy in Rwanda in 1993 and 1994 and Berlin's foreign policy today can only be compared to a certain extent; the context of German foreign policy has changed significantly, and the genocide in Rwanda was unique in many ways. Yet the analysis of the federal government's actions at the time helps clarify the questions that German policymakers, the expert community, and civil society still ask today – or should still ask today – about the lessons from the genocide in Rwanda with regard to crisis prevention, conflict management, and peacebuilding.

In our opinion, the present analysis in particular raises questions on early warning, strategic capacities, Berlin's capabilities for early action, and Germany's capacities to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions. These issues and questions remain relevant for German foreign policy. Despite varying degrees of progress, in most of these areas German policymakers have not put in place the conditions that would allow any federal government to meaningfully assert that it treats the prevention of genocide as "integral to Germany's 'reason of state'" (*raison d'état*).

Early Warning and Conflict Analysis

In terms of early warning, the political analysis by both the German embassy in Kigali and the Foreign Office in Bonn in 1993 were largely inadequate – despite the availability of crucial information. The German Foreign Office was not alone in this. The analyses of other Western embassies were also flawed, and many development workers in Rwanda similarly

126 Federal Government 2017a, 47; Federal Government 2017b, 47. Germany's first-ever national security strategy, published in 2023, does not include the words "genocide" or "crimes against humanity," but it includes a commitment to implementing the 2017 guidelines; Federal Government 2023, 41.

underestimated the potential for violence and continued to hope for the best – especially from the fall of 1993 onwards.[127] Many other actors, however – especially Rwandan and international human rights organizations – correctly assessed the potential for violence in the country and the role that parts of the inner circle around President Habyarimana played in stoking it.

Today, 30 years later, the Foreign Office and other German ministries have developed a more sophisticated infrastructure for (partly data-driven) early warning – albeit focused mainly on conflict prevention and not specifically the prevention of mass atrocities. The abovementioned 2017 guidelines also established an inter-ministerial working group on early warning, which reports to a "Coordination Group" made up of the relevant ministries at the level of directors-general. Nevertheless, some central deficits in early warning that can lead to inaccurate political analyses still remain today.

- To this day, neither the Foreign Office nor other ministries offer trainings on risk factors for genocide or other mass atrocities as part of their pre-deployment preparation for staff posted abroad. How can policymakers be expected to correctly identify and process warning signs if they lack the corresponding analytical tools?

- In addition to diplomats, Germany deploys a variety of security actors around the world, including police liaison officers, military advisors, and officers of the Federal Intelligence Service. To this day, at least according to publicly available information and going beyond yearly human rights reports, there is no concrete, event-related obligation for those actors to report on indications of mass violence or even genocide[128] that they have gathered in the course of their work or through contacts with the security actors of the respective host country.[129] How can embassies, Foreign Office diplomats in Berlin, and the German government as a whole arrive at a nuanced analysis of a given situation without this type of essential data?

- Just like in the 1990s, neither embassies nor desk officers at the Foreign Office have a particular incentive to raise the alarm in the case of serious concerns. The reality is quite the opposite. The direct consequences of such reports are often feared, as it can make access to the respective government more difficult, increase the workload, and – in case of 'false alarms' (often derided as 'alarmism') – even put professional reputations at risk.[130] In addition, there is a lack of viable avenues for action. What concrete, feasible, and promising policy options do senior German officials and ministers have? To incentivize the reporting of warning signs, it remains important to discuss specific possibilities for action within the diplomatic service.

Strategic Capacity and Inter-Ministerial Coordination

In addition to the inadequate political analysis, the records of the Foreign Office also indicate a lack of both political will and the necessary coordination in Bonn to adjust Germany's

127 Asche 1995, 17.

128 A list of indicators can be found, for example, in the "Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes" of the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect; United Nations 2014; see also Heinemann-Grüder, Glatz, and Rotmann 2021, 73–86.

129 Brockmeier and Rotmann 2018, 25

130 Kurtz and Meyer 2019, 30–31, 36 n6; see also Brockmeier, Kurtz and Rotmann 2013, 123.

policies in time to potentially prevent a genocide. The records we reviewed show that the key actors within the federal government – the Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Federal Ministry of Defense – did not make any significant attempt to shift course or even have a joint discussion on possible adjustments to their policies in Rwanda at all. This would have been possible and appropriate at several points in the period leading up the genocide – for example, when the civil war escalated once again in January and February 1993, when the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) published its report in March 1993, or after the signing of the Arusha Accords in August 1993.

Since then, and especially in recent years, the coordination between key German ministries on the ground in conflict countries has improved. Yet in Berlin, policymakers have repeatedly failed over the past ten years to agree on establishing a coordination structure akin to a national security council. This was the case during discussions on expanding the Federal Security Council (*Bundessicherheitsrat*) during the development of the *White Paper on Security Policy* in 2016,[131] during debates on the aforementioned 2017 guidelines on crisis prevention, as well as more recently during the development of Germany's first-ever national security strategy.[132] Since 2018, a Coordination Group for "Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution, Peacebuilding" exists at the level of directors-general and is intended to bridge operational and strategic decision-making. Moreover, starting in 2019, the development ministry and the Foreign Office have strengthened their joint analysis and planning for a number of countries.[133] Still, significant deficits regarding a shared political analysis and strategic capacity remain.

- Due to its inability to agree on a higher-level coordination body such as a national security council, and as of early 2024, the German government still lacks a forum for strategic debate and the coordination of its various instruments, including development cooperation and programs such as its "enable and enhance" initiative, German equipment assistance, or security sector reform. Even after the publication of the national security strategy, the question remains: How can Berlin address this strategic deficit? What role should the Foreign Office play in Germany's national security architecture? What could be possible compromises that future governing parties might agree upon in coalition negotiations to adjust Germany's national security architecture?[134]

- Even today, many German embassies in countries that are at risk of conflict have no more personnel than the German embassy in Kigali did in 1993 and 1994. Even in countries such as Mali, where the German government deployed hundreds of soldiers and invested millions of Euros in development funds in recent years, the staffing situation was scarcely better.[135] Regardless of the specific errors in the political analysis provided by the Kigali embassy in 1993/94: this degree of understaffing has consequences. How can a political team of only two people find the time or maintain the necessary diversity of contacts as well as an internal discussion culture to investigate contradictory assessments independently of institutional conflicts (such

131 Federal Government 2016.

132 Federal Government 2017; Brockmeier and Ruge 2022; Schreer 2023.

133 Federal Government 2019a, 9; Federal Government 2019b; Federal Government 2021; Kurtz 2021.

134 Brockmeier 2019; Bunde, Erber and Kabus 2020; Rotmann 2021.

135 Brockmeier 2020.

as those between the Foreign Office and the GTZ plus the Ministry of Development Cooperation in 1993)? Should there be a minimum number of political personnel in German embassies in countries that are at risk of violent conflict?

- Even today, the Foreign Office in Berlin lacks the capacities necessary for comprehensive analyses and, above all, for better strategy development. Although Germany now plays a much more significant role in international politics, the total number of budgeted positions in the German foreign service today has only increased in recent years – and only by a total of 8.7 percent between 1993 and 2022. At the same time, especially in the field of conflict prevention and stabilization, the project funds that Foreign Office diplomats are supposed to manage have doubled between 2010 and 2020 alone.[136] How should staffing be adjusted so that, in addition to the flood of information and increase in the number of projects, more time is available for thorough political analysis and the development of policy options and strategies?[137]

Moving from Early Warning to Early Action

In 1993 and 1994, the German government had limited possibilities and little ambition to contribute to multilateral prevention efforts in Rwanda. However, with a more nuanced situational analysis, it could possibly have exerted stronger pressure on President Habyarimana's government and his inner circle. For example, the government could have at least tried to make the continuation of at least some development programs dependent on respect for human rights and progress in the formation of the transitional government. Conditionality was sporadically threatened by Germany and some other donor countries, but only Canada, the fourth- or fifth-largest donor country in 1989 and 1990, respectively, actually imposed such conditions from 1992 onward.[138] During the genocide, the German government could have at least made a small contribution to the efforts of UNAMIR by providing the military capacities requested at various times by different actors. None of this happened. Despite the widespread self-perception of Germany being a particularly credible actor in Rwanda and wider the region, the German government apparently did not even attempt to play a greater role in the peace negotiations or initiate its own political initiatives. Instead, it aligned its policy with the former colonial powers France and Belgium. Thirty years later, Germany's foreign policy role in Europe and the world is more significant. The German government and the EU have since created a range of instruments aimed at enabling early action which did not exist in 1994. These include various forms of flexible project funding for conflict prevention. Today, there is a broader spectrum of multilateral and civil society actors that can point out and ideally mitigate in situations of dangerous escalation through such support. Furthermore, both German police officers and the Bundeswehr have gained valuable experience in peace and stabilization missions. However, here too deficits remain.

- Even today, despite many improvements, Germany rarely puts forward its own independent political and diplomatic initiatives, especially on the African continent. Mali was a case in point: while Germany may often have disagreed with the political strategy pursued by France in the Sahel region,

136 1993: 7.200 budgeted positions; 2022: 7.824,5 budgeted positions; Federal Government 2006, 4; Bundesministerium der Finanzen 2022: 115; Brockmeier 2020.

137 Brockmeier and Rotmann 2019, 55–78.

138 Uvin 1998, 90–93.

Berlin never developed real alternative proposals for European action in the region.[139] What needs to change in order for more meaningful political strategies to emerge from Germany – especially for conflict regions where France or other former colonial powers wield significant influence?

- In this context, there is also a need for debate on how Germany's profile in peace mediation can be sharpened. Germany is often deeply involved economically or politically and can rarely be considered genuinely neutral. At the same time, as was the case in Rwanda in 1993, in some countries, and particularly in Africa, Germany does enjoy higher credibility than the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Under what circumstances should the German government position itself as a mediator? What capacities for mediation need to be strengthened, for instance, through adequate and long-term financing or through a pool of flexibly deployable and specifically trained diplomats at the Foreign Office?

- Between 2015 and 2023, Germany contributed a significant number of troops to the UN mission in Mali – at times up to 1000 soldiers. This represented a tripling of the number of German troops serving in international missions compared to previous years. In its 2016 white paper on security policy[140] and the 2017 guidelines on crisis prevention[141], the German government defined contributions to UN peace operations as key tasks of the Bundeswehr. The 2017 guidelines explicitly refer to the "protection of the civilian population" in mission countries as a task. Yet as of late November 2023, the German contribution to UN missions is more than modest: out of the approximately 67,000 peacekeepers who are deployed in 22 UN operations worldwide, Germany contributed 357 troops. Of those soldiers, 230 were still deployed in Mali and about to be withdrawn due to the winding down of the UN mission in the country. In the same month, of the 7022 police officers serving in UN missions only three officers were from Germany.[142] Since the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022, German debates on the role of the Bundeswehr and on national security have understandably focused heavily on national and collective defense. But there still also needs to be a debate on both the criteria for Bundeswehr deployments in international missions and on German capabilities. What degree of staffing for UN peace operations should the Bundeswehr plan for in the long term? In which specialized capabilities that the UN urgently needs (e.g., transport or communication) should the German government invest in the future? Under what circumstances is Germany even willing to provide soldiers, police officers, and civilians for peacekeeping operations?

Further Processing of Germany's Policies and Lessons

Our analysis of this initial selection of records from the Political Archive of the Foreign Office has also demonstrated the need for a much more comprehensive examination of Germany's

139 Asche 2020; VAD-Ausschuss Sahel 2020.

140 Federal Government 2016, Chapter 5.3.

141 Federal Government 2017, 89.

142 United Nations 2020. For the 2023 numbers of all missions and troops, see United Nations 2024a. For German contributions, see United Nations 2024b.

policy toward Rwanda before and after 1994. A closer look into these archival materials has contextualized some previous insights, such as those presented in the internal evaluations by Jürgen Wolff and Andreas Mehler. More extended interviews with Rwandan and German eyewitnesses as well as additional international diplomatic observers could lead to many more such insights. In addition, those Foreign Office records that we could not access should be systematically evaluated, too, as should those of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the GTZ (now GIZ), and the Federal Chancellery. All of those records, like the reviewed Foreign Office records, are subject to a thirty-year confidentiality period – which means that as of 2024 they should be more easily accessible. For the sake of an accurate historical account, as outlined in a motion by the Green and Left Party parliamentary groups in 2019,[143] a detailed historical examination remains crucial.

Future discussions on German foreign policy would also benefit from these types of in-depth examinations, covering topics ranging from early warning and political analysis to interdepartmental coordination, the strategic capacities of the federal government, and the conditions for a timely response to warning signs.

143 German Bundestag 2019.

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Order Numbers ("Bestellnummern") of Documents Accessed in the Political Archive of the Foreign Office

For this research, we requested records from a total of 41 volumes ("Akten" in German), of which we received 40. These primarily included documents from the German Embassy in Kigali and the division "East Africa, Zaire" (then Division 322) from the year 1993, documents on the topics of refugees, asylum, and political persecution from the year 1993, volumes on military and police equipment assistance to Rwanda from the years 1992 to 1994, crisis and disaster plans from the years 1990 to 1994, as well as documents on humanitarian aid and the UN division (then Division 230) of the Foreign Office for the period April to December 1994.

If the records contained materials from other ministries, the Bundestag, or civil society, the regulations of the Political Archive only allowed us to reproduce content from documents originating from the Foreign Office itself.

Quotes from these records are reproduced in amended spelling for readability (e.g., capitalization in cables). Documents from the Foreign Office are cited as follows:

> *[DD.MM.YYYY]: [Identification number/Title on the document], [Order number/ "Bestellnummer" of the document volume in the Political Archive of the Foreign Office]. [Internal number of the authors].*

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- B 34 (ZA): 157213, 160117, 160118, 160119, 160120, 160121, 160122
- B 45 (ZA): 192392, 192393, 192394, 192395, 192396, 192397, 192402, 192403, 192404, 192447
- B 46 (ZA): 219732, 219733, 303170, 304514
- B 55 (ZA): 188144
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- B 87 (Alt): 179175
- B 89 (ZA): 217960, 320254, 320257

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- B 213: 4129, 12146, 12151, 12152, 21966, 21967, 21973, 21975, 21976, 28121, 32853
- B 136: 17350
- B 187: 274, 3752

Official Translations of German Ministry Vocabulary:

Abteilung	Directorate-General
Referat	Division
Abteilungsleiter*in	Director-General
Referatsleiter*in	Head of Division

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- Book 452, 09.01.2014: The Rwanda "Genocide Fax": What We Know Now. https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB452/
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Original Interviews and Written Statements

- David Rawson, 28.12.2019, interview
- Joyce Leader, 19.05.2020, written statement
- Liberata Mulamula, 27.10.2020, written statement

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Cover photo: view of the interior of St. Jean catholic church in Kibuye, Rwanda (photo credit: MilanoPE via Shutterstock)

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