

# Strategy Research Project

## American Responsibility and Opportunity in the Great Lakes Region in Africa

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### Abstract

In 1994, a three-month long genocide engulfed Rwanda resulting in 800,000 deaths and enduring instability across the Great Lakes region of Africa. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda was unable to deter or effectively respond to the violence because the UN Security Council did not adjust to the changing conditions, and the peacekeeping force lacked credibility. Additionally, despite sufficient knowledge of the situation, the United States did not adequately support United Nations' efforts. As of 2018, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) shares the same characteristics. According to the principles underpinning U.S. National Security Strategies since the end of the Cold War, the United States should increase its direct support for MONUSCO. Investing manpower and materiel to help the United Nations succeed in the Great Lakes region is consistent with American values and advances America's long-term strategic interests.

## **American Responsibility and Opportunity in the Great Lakes Region in Africa**

Investing manpower and materiel to help the United Nations (UN) succeed in the Great Lakes region of Africa (GLR) is not only consistent with American values, but also advances America's long-term strategic interests. Since early 1994, the GLR has witnessed a genocide of approximately 800,000 people and two major regional wars, including "one of the deadliest conflicts since World War II."<sup>1</sup> It is currently enduring "one of the worst humanitarian crises" on the African continent.<sup>2</sup> The region, defined by the Department of State as Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is not high among America's current strategic priorities.<sup>3</sup> Though it seems contradictory, it is for exactly that reason that the United States should increase its support for the existing UN mission in DRC. The UN has the potential to provide stability and security in regions where the US cannot afford to invest unilaterally. As the world becomes more disorderly, a credible UN will be increasingly valuable.

Beginning with a study of the 1994 genocide is useful for several reasons. First, there are direct correlations between the failure of the UN mission in Rwanda and the questionable performance of the UN mission in DRC today. With history as a guide, the United States has the means and standing to address the shortcomings. Second, the historical precedent will magnify the negative effects of another failed mission in the GLR for both the UN and the United States. Third, the similarity of the situations provides a platform to analyze U.S. strategic documents across four administrations. Despite a wide range of global contexts, greater support for UN efforts in the GLR would be justified by the philosophical and practical imperatives of each administration. The end of the Cold War and the transition from the George HW Bush to the Clinton administration are instructive regarding American inaction in Rwanda. Similarly, the

changeover from the Obama to Trump administrations provides a valuable perspective regarding the current situation in DRC. Ultimately, the UN, the GLR, and the United States stand to benefit from greater direct U.S. involvement in UN efforts.

### Synopsis of Rwanda

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda was a watershed for the international community and, specifically, the UN. It correlates to contemporary issues in the Great Lakes region and provides a useful example to shape future American actions regarding the UN. In 1998, President William Clinton described the genocide as “the most intensive slaughter in this blood-filled century.”<sup>4</sup> Indications of significant trouble were present long before the catastrophic outbreak of violence in April 1994. In the months leading up to the genocide, specific information showed that Interahamwe militia, who ultimately comprised a large percentage of *génocidaires*, conducted detailed planning and training. They even calculated the rate at which they planned to kill their targets.<sup>5</sup> The genocide played out in the presence of a UN peace operation and was essentially unmitigated by the international community for its three-month duration. Neither causes nor effects of the violence were confined to the borders of Rwanda, and still today, the Great Lakes countries are in one of the most persistently unstable areas of the world.<sup>6</sup>

For this analysis, three interrelated issues regarding the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda’s (UNAMIR) performance translate to the current situation in the Great Lakes region. First, when the UN’s strategic assessment and planning factors for UNAMIR proved invalid, no meaningful change was made to reorient the mission. Second, the UN lacked credibility and was, therefore, unable to deter or defeat aggression. This was first shown by failing to resource the mission properly in both quantity and quality but manifested most significantly in the withdrawal of the Belgian

contingent. Third, U.S. strategic interests aligned with the success of the UN task in Rwanda, but the United States failed to support the mission beyond its original mandate. This undermined long-term U.S. and UN credibility and is the most substantial overarching consideration for the contemporary environment.

The strategic assessment that informed UNAMIR's creation was fundamentally flawed. The UN established UNAMIR in October 1993 to monitor a tenuous peace as the Hutu-majority Government of Rwanda and the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front implemented the Arusha Peace Agreement.<sup>7</sup> That agreement, underpinning UNAMIR and signed in the context of long simmering strife, assumed that all parties committed to its principles and wanted peace. UNAMIR was to observe, monitor and investigate incidents, if required, to enforce the agreement.<sup>8</sup> The UN explicitly approved the mission "under peaceful conditions with the full cooperation of all the parties."<sup>9</sup> This notion prevailed even though, only a week after Arusha, the UN Commission on Human Rights published findings that genocide might be underway.<sup>10</sup> This incoherence could be attributed to bureaucratic inertia. It could also reflect the fact that there was little appetite for intervening in an ethnic war, so the UN Security Council (UNSC) dismissed the information.<sup>11</sup> In the end, the mission was under-resourced in personnel and equipment, and deployed with poorly framed understanding of the strategic environment. As a point of reference, Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, the mission commander, assessed he needed 8,000 troops. In coordination with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, his request was reduced to 4,500 "to deter a Security Council veto."<sup>12</sup> There were only 2,538 personnel on the ground when the genocide began in the first week of

April.<sup>13</sup> With those as the underlying conditions, UNAMIR had limited capacity to respond to contingencies.

As the situation on the ground devolved into full-scale genocide, the UNSC collectively could not reorient the mission. The report of the UN Independent Inquiry found that even weeks into the event there was a “clear reluctance to contemplate a Chapter VII-style operation [Chapter VII addresses *Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression*, and can include offensive operations if necessary].”<sup>14</sup> The mission never transitioned from its passive mandate to an aggressive intervention that the situation demanded. One enlightening report to the UN Secretary-General in early May stated “whatever action is contemplated could be implemented only if both Rwandese parties agree to it and promise their cooperation.”<sup>15</sup> The incongruity of that assertion illustrates the disparity between the UNSC’s assessment of the situation and the one-sided nature of the violence. The reluctance to distinguish between perpetrators and victims created a barrier to intervention. Even in July, the Clinton administration referred to the genocide as “ethnic fighting.”<sup>16</sup> The UNSC did not yet view the situation from the perspective later codified as *The Responsibility to Protect (R2P)*.<sup>17</sup> UNAMIR’s performance reflected their lack of clear purpose and inability to re-assess the strategic environment.

From the tactical units up through political leadership of the troop-contributing countries, UNAMIR lacked credibility. They not only failed to deter violence, but their weak commitment incentivized aggression. The Belgian and Bangladeshi contingents provide two useful examples to illustrate this point. The perpetrators of the genocide planned for months before the outbreak of violence to target Belgian peacekeepers.

They did this with the explicit expectation that killing some number of them would cause Brussels to withdraw.<sup>18</sup> Within hours of the outset of major violence, Rwandan government soldiers captured ten Belgian soldiers. They were subsequently tortured and executed.<sup>19</sup> As predicted, Belgium began withdrawing its contingent. More importantly, they lobbied for a complete UNAMIR evacuation.<sup>20</sup> This validated the *génocidaires'* belief that the UN force was not an obstacle to their intentions and would not stand and fight if confronted.

The Bangladesh contingent proved similarly problematic. They deployed with no logistical support beyond their personal gear. Instead of adding capability, they became a “logistical burden” to an under-resourced mission.<sup>21</sup> After the violence erupted, the Bangladeshi contingent, on orders from Dhaka, refused to risk troops to protect Rwandans. They rebuffed orders from UNAMIR commanders, falsified reports and, in the mission commander’s assessment, went “to ground inside their compounds in a state of fear.”<sup>22</sup> The Bangladeshi contingent represented a lack of a credible, quality force.

These two examples show a fundamental point. Any expectation that UN forces or their governments will give up if confronted undermines the concept of the UN as an authoritative body. To be effective, UN forces must be respected, and their commitment cannot be in doubt, just like any other armed force. UNAMIR lacked credibility as an organization from the execution level through the strategic decision makers.

The final issue for this case study is the disparity between America’s actions in response to the deteriorating situation and its stated interests. American officials knew the trajectory of the conditions on the ground in Rwanda from the earliest stages of the

genocide, but the United States blocked efforts to respond. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, the Department of State declared “that there is insufficient justification to retain a UN Peacekeeping presence in Rwanda and that the international community must give the highest priority to full, orderly withdrawal of all UNAMIR personnel as soon as possible.”<sup>23</sup> While the specific tactical picture was convoluted, senior U.S. officials knew the scale of the killings and that the *génocidaires* were specifically targeting Tutsis.<sup>24</sup> Journalists actively documented systematic ethnically targeted executions.<sup>25</sup> The nature of the information available at the time of the event does not support the assertion that the U.S. government was unaware of the breadth, depth or ethnic dimension of the crisis to the level it later claimed.<sup>26</sup> In a subsequent analysis, the Organization for African Unity asserted, “it is indisputably true that no nation did more than the U.S. to undermine the effectiveness of UNAMIR.”<sup>27</sup> Further, in September 1994, after a request for additional life-saving efforts, General Dallaire observed, “it was the apathy of the United States...that once again stifled any urge to act.”<sup>28</sup> The United States neither led nor supported a meaningful response to a well-organized, efficient and highly coordinated genocide despite the belief of the sitting administration that “American leadership in the world has never been more important.”<sup>29</sup>

A review of key strategic documents from the period illustrates a gulf between America’s words and deeds. The U.S. *National Security Strategies (NSSs)* from 1991 through 1994 are useful to show evolving perspectives between presidential administrations in the early 1990’s. The George H. W. Bush administration published the 1991 *NSS* and the 1993 *NSS* on the heels of two substantial foreign policy successes. The end of the Cold War validated the export of American values and

proved the efficacy of American strategic decision making. Similarly, the quick and decisive victory in the Gulf War validated the superiority of American military power, and reinforced the notion that Americans could compel compliance when necessary. Bush published the *NSSs* during the transition to the post-Cold War era when a wholesale change of national security policy was possible. The 1991 *NSS* indicates a very strong sentiment of global responsibility. It proposes a “New World Order” constructed in the likeness of American values.<sup>30</sup> By 1993, the notion was advanced even further as an “unprecedented opportunity to promote [American] interests rather than simply defend them.”<sup>31</sup> This passage overtly acknowledged that the United States could not influence the world to the degree it desired during the Cold War because of the counterbalance of the Soviet Union. Clear throughout both strategies is a recognition that America was not omnipotent, and needed the help of other nations, while reinforcing the unique burden carried by the only remaining superpower. The 1991 version praises the UN as “vindicated and rejuvenated” based on its response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.<sup>32</sup> Two years later, the *NSS* advocates “taking an active role in the full spectrum of UN peacekeeping and humanitarian relief planning and support,” stating unequivocally “the United Nations has been given a new lease on life, emerging as a central instrument for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace.”<sup>33</sup>

A noteworthy passage in the 1991 document states “many Africans now fear that the outside world will lose interest in their troubled continent.”<sup>34</sup> The only reason to include that language was to reassure a reader that the fear was unwarranted. Clearly, the Bush administration believed there was value and necessity in engagement in Africa even without competition from the Soviet Union. The 1993 document also trumpeted

leadership in Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia as “designed to encourage other nations to contribute.”<sup>35</sup> The clear direction of the administration was to engage globally with the underlying rationale that advancing American values was not only a way, but also an end. It is also clear that the administration viewed America as a catalyst for others. Combining the concepts from both strategy documents results in a policy vector to engage in Africa, using the UN to advance American values and encourage participation from like-minded countries. Guided by the Bush-era documents, it is difficult to formulate rationale for anything other than early and formidable American intervention to stop the 1994 genocide.

Unlike the 1991 and 1993 documents, President Clinton published his first *NSS* in the aftermath of a significant U.S. foreign policy failure in Somalia. The 1994 iteration, published in July, reflects a nuanced difference in the expansiveness of America’s global posture when compared to the preceding versions. While the need for American leadership and the goodness implicit in promoting American values is still expressed, each mention of U.S. involvement is caveated. The aspirational theme of the New World Order from the Bush administration takes on a more pragmatic tone: “[America] can and must make the difference through [its] engagement; but [its] involvement must be carefully tailored to serve [its] interest and priorities.”<sup>36</sup> This concept was thoroughly expanded by Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25), which is directly referenced in the body of the *NSS*, but was itself classified at the time.<sup>37</sup>

PDD-25, *U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations*, placed restrictive and much more structured criteria on U.S. decision making regarding support to UN peace operations. It outlined specific and stringent requirements as the level of

potential U.S. commitment progressed from voting for an operation, to participating, to participating with the expectation of combat.<sup>38</sup> Each level of engagement demanded a direct tie to advancing U.S. interests. What is impossible to codify, however, is how intangible criteria like proliferating “freedom, equality and human dignity” is weighted and what threshold is required in a scenario before those things are a U.S. interest.<sup>39</sup> In general, the reference to peacekeeping as a “useful tool for advancing U.S. national security in some circumstances” shows the Clinton administration was more practical than philosophical in its interpretation of U.S. interests.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, the situation in Rwanda from April through July 1994 could have met the specified criteria for all levels of engagement established in PDD-25 if the administration deemed the cause worthy.

There are three criteria in PDD-25 which pinpoint the problem of U.S. intervention in scenarios that do not pose a direct threat to the United States: 1) the need for domestic and congressional support; 2) the requirement for clearly defined objectives with an “end point” for U.S. participation, and; 3) if expecting combat, the “intention of decisively achieving these objectives.”<sup>41</sup> First, mustering domestic and congressional support for an intervention, with no direct, tangible link to immediate U.S. security is heavily influenced by the President’s willingness to spend political capital. As the Commander-in-Chief, he can influence the political discourse and urgency surrounding a matter. His avoidance of an issue or unconvincing arguments can make lack of support a self-fulfilling restriction. Second, the ability to have clearly defined objectives and an end to U.S. participation depends on how policy makers frame the problem. With Rwanda, had the problem been framed as a need to stop a politically motivated and centrally controlled genocide, clear objectives and an end state would

have been achievable. If the problem were framed in the grand context of ending ethnic strife and resolving political discord in the region, then neither of those criteria could be met. Finally, the ability to achieve the stated objectives depends on how much risk and expense is acceptable. That requires an unequivocal calculation as to the worth of the mission, in this case, ending a genocide. The conclusion to draw from PDD-25 is that despite the articulation of specific criteria, the decision to support a mission or commit troops cannot be reduced to a formula, particularly when American citizens are not at risk. The President must determine America's stance on how the application or restraint of U.S. power fits in the nation's grand strategy.

#### Aftermath

For this analysis, President Clinton's speech at the airport in Kigali 1998 is very helpful. That he addressed his administration's decisions while still the sitting President is enlightening. He avoided critiquing American conduct directly but was clear about the response of the international community. Clinton acknowledged the severity of the genocide and went on to say that the international community shared in the blame because it "did not act quickly enough."<sup>42</sup> He also included a strong commitment in his address:

We owe to all the people in the world our best efforts to organize ourselves so that we can maximize the chances of preventing these events. And where they cannot be prevented, we can move more quickly to minimize the horror.<sup>43</sup>

This is an early articulation of the concept of *R2P*. The President's speech showed that the events of April through June 1994 met the threshold for international intervention and, since it is "clear [the United States] must exercise global leadership," it naturally

follows that there should have been a concerted effort to align the checklist of requirements, eventually codified in PDD-25, to enable action.<sup>44</sup>

A review of the National Security Strategies from 1991 to 1994, with the added clarity provided by President Clinton's speech in Kigali, shows that a consistent application of U.S. policy and interests should have resulted in American action to end the genocide using the most effective multilateral option available. Another significant point regarding President Clinton's address, though, is that speaking at the site of the genocide with survivors in the audience increases the stakes. The President's words cannot be sterilized and viewed through a pure policy lens. Rather, his tone and physical presence communicated a strong commitment that will be the basis of judgment for future U.S. actions. His admission also drives a very relevant lesson regarding the potential peril of trying to define narrowly U.S. interests while withholding the means to stop a great moral ill. American credibility, particularly in the Great Lakes region, will now be tied to the implicit commitment made by President Clinton.

Since the President's speech a series of significant developments have matured the U.S. and international position on mass atrocities. In 2001, in response to Rwanda and other catastrophic events, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) published *R2P*. The premise is that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their citizens. If they are unable or unwilling to do so, the international community must shoulder that burden and normal deference to state sovereignty yields.<sup>45</sup> The United States and international community offered "clear and unambiguous acceptance" of the concept at the 2005 World Summit.<sup>46</sup> The 2006 *NSS* mirrored the concept in the context of genocide, but then, as a point of clarification,

dismissed inaction due to “legal debate over the technical definition of ‘genocide’.”<sup>47</sup> The actual ICISS document noted that genocidal intent was unnecessary to meet the just cause threshold.<sup>48</sup> Both the 2010 and 2015 National Security Strategies eliminated any ambiguity and codified *R2P* as U.S. policy.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to his National Security Strategies, President Obama issued Presidential Study Directive 10 (PSD-10) in August 2011, which informed Executive Order 13729. Besides reinforcing the principles of *R2P*, PSD-10 also acknowledged that the U.S. was still “ill-prepared” to prevent or respond to mass atrocities.<sup>50</sup> The resultant Atrocities Prevention Board was intended to provide an interagency vehicle for early identification and prevention before “the menu of options has shrunk considerably and the costs of action have risen.”<sup>51</sup> It codified the moral responsibility borne by the United States to prevent, not just respond to, global events. It also reiterated that core American security, reputation and influence in the world are affected when mass atrocities occur.<sup>52</sup>

Much like the release of the 1994 *NSS* and PDD-25, the Obama administration followed the 2015 *NSS* with a memorandum to the heads of executive agencies to account for the increase in the “scale and scope” of peace operations since PDD-25.<sup>53</sup> The 2015 *NSS* explicitly acknowledged the increasing cost of action once a problem reaches “crisis proportions.”<sup>54</sup> It went further, though, with a critical passage regarding the administration’s world view: “In an interconnected world, there are no global problems that can be solved without the United States, and few that can be solved by the United States alone.”<sup>55</sup> When combined with the observation in the memorandum that “Multilateral peace operations, particularly United Nations (UN) peace operations,

will, therefore, continue to be among the primary international tools that we use to address conflict related crises,” the documents favor considerable U.S. priority for UN efforts.<sup>56</sup> This is especially true considering “these operations are among the most meaningful forms of international burden-sharing.”<sup>57</sup> Under the Trump administration, the tone of the 2017 *NSS* regarding multilateral operations is less enthusiastic, but under certain circumstances the mutual benefit is clear and still justified.

#### 2018 United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO)

The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) is the only remaining UN peace operation in the Great Lakes region.<sup>58</sup> However, the security interdependence of the states in the region has been broadly recognized and documented, even in U.S. Public Law.<sup>59</sup> In December 2017, the UNSC asserted that the “situation in the Great Lakes region should come within a regional perspective...with cross-border issues linked to the eastern DRC assuming crucial significance.”<sup>60</sup> So, despite the fact that there are no UN missions in the other countries, MONUSCO is well positioned and empowered to have a considerable positive impact across the region by improving the situation in DRC.

The UN's performance, though, has been unequal to its mandate. Comparing the present condition of MONUSCO to the UNAMIR operation in 1994, it is plain that the same three interrelated issues persist. First, while the UN has shown a greater willingness to assess the strategic situation and even adjust its posture, its efforts have been insufficient. Second, the UN forces lack the credibility to be effective. Third, U.S. interests are, again, aligned with aggressively engaging via the UN, but it has not supported the effort sufficiently.

The UN has demonstrated significant transparency regarding the effectiveness of MONUSCO and the overall strategic situation in DRC and the GLR. In 2013, because of continued deterioration, the UNSC authorized an Intervention Brigade to augment MONUSCO.<sup>61</sup> This represented a credible and tangible action by the UN to adjust the mission relative to a fresh strategic assessment. The intent was to eradicate armed groups through proactive measures and set the conditions for improvement. While the Intervention Brigade was only authorized within the existing force ceiling, it was still a meaningful attempt to put teeth into a failing effort. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2098 included a mandate, among other specific tasks, to conduct “targeted offensive operations” to prevent expansion, neutralize and disarm “all armed groups.”<sup>62</sup> It is notable that such a significant resolution authorizing a Chapter VII operation passed the UN unanimously.<sup>63</sup> This effort showed a significant step in the evolution of the mission and deviates significantly from the 1994 UNAMIR precedent. However, over four years since authorizing the Intervention Brigade, the situation has not resolved to an acceptable status.

Further adjustment is required for the UN and its member states to match words with deeds. Two comprehensive UN reports submitted in response to UNSCR 2348 (2017) acknowledged the deterioration of the security situation, proliferation of human rights abuses and the dire humanitarian situation that persists.<sup>64</sup> The September 2017 UN Strategic Review of MONUSCO warned that “rapid deterioration cannot be ruled out.”<sup>65</sup> The same document reported “ethnically motivated attacks,” “large-scale atrocities,” and the discovery of “mass graves.”<sup>66</sup> These negative indicators are not limited to DRC. All four states in the Great Lakes region are independently ranked as

“Alert” or “High Alert” status on the Fund for Peace 2017 Fragile States Index.<sup>67</sup>

Considering there are roughly 70 armed groups operating in DRC, many staging cross-border attacks, and that there are 7 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million “refugees and asylum seekers,” the cumulative fragility of the region is most certainly worse.<sup>68</sup>

As of mid-October 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres asserted that “vigorous action is needed to neutralize the continued threats posed by negative forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region as a whole.”<sup>69</sup> He identified this as the first priority to continue to advance the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreed to in 2013.<sup>70</sup> This has been a consistent theme and tied to a “potential for fresh violence,” “significant violations of human rights and an increase in widespread displacement of people in neighboring countries.”<sup>71</sup> The UN has been forthcoming in its analysis of the situation, even substantiating a point made by President Clinton. In 1998 he warned that “each bloodletting hastens the next as the value of human life is degraded and violence becomes tolerated, the unimaginable becomes more conceivable.”<sup>72</sup> As part of its regional conflict analysis for the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-17, the UN observed:

[E]xposure to violence over generations has resulted in a breakdown of social norms and taboos. The spinoff is that violent behavior is now perceived as “normal,” with unending cycles of intergenerational violence persisting at all levels of the society.<sup>73</sup>

The overall conduct of the mission in DRC and the political backing of the UN member states lacks credibility. The 2015 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations report to the Secretary-General observed that “there is a clear sense of a widening gap between what is being asked of UN peace operations today and what

they are able to deliver.”<sup>74</sup> This is particularly true of MONUSCO. UNSCR 2348, passed on March 31, 2017, details a long series of severe issues with the overall security situation in eastern DRC which, as noted, has a significant and direct impact across the region. At the same time, 2348 reduced the troop ceiling of MONUSCO.<sup>75</sup> The resolution passed after the U.S. Ambassador to the UN threatened to block the extension of the MONUSCO mandate due to the conduct of the DRC government against its own population.<sup>76</sup> The security situation does not support pulling troops out in the face of unjust violence, undermining the legitimacy of the UN. It also directly contradicts the notion of *R2P*, causing a reversal of U.S. policy and providing an incentive for those who want to eliminate UN interference to continue to attack civilians. The parallel to the Belgian conduct in 1994 is foreboding for MONUSCO. Also foreboding, on December 7, 2017 14 MONUSCO soldiers were killed in “the worst attack on ‘blue helmets’ in recent history.”<sup>77</sup> Though no direct correlation has been offered by an investigation, bold attacks on peacekeepers have broken UN will in the past. Threatening to withdraw support to the mission undermines its credibility, which, as seen in 1994, is often part of the calculus of the opposition forces.

Many specific episodes have eroded the credibility of the mission and proven that lack of commitment to articulated principles is the root cause of the problem. Susanna Kalaris, from the Council on Foreign Relations, recorded an example from November 2012, just months prior to the approval for the Intervention Brigade. Faced with an assault, peacekeepers fled the city of Goma, abandoning the civilians there, instead of fighting a smaller and less well-equipped armed group.<sup>78</sup> With the proper mandate and international will, the Intervention Brigade and the DRC Army (FARDC)

defeated and dispatched the same group the following year.<sup>79</sup> Similar escalation and concentrated effort is necessary again.

Improving the condition of the Great Lakes region and preventing a continued descent into the chaos that has engulfed the region in the past is in both the long and short-term interest of the United States. To this point, the U.S. has not sufficiently supported the effort. The 2017 *NSS* only mentions the UN in the context of its need for reform.<sup>80</sup> Even the U.S. AFRICOM posture statement omits any reference to MONUSCO, despite its lengthy and significant presence.<sup>81</sup> This lack of acknowledgment for the UN exacerbates the existing credibility problem. Despite the moniker of “An America First National Security Strategy,” the success of MONUSCO is important.<sup>82</sup> An urgent and direct threat to the U.S. homeland emanating from the Great Lakes is difficult to identify, but, when it comes to championing American values, few places have tragic recent history that competes with the GLR.<sup>83</sup> It bears contemplating that since the United States has veto power on the UNSC, each UNSCR documenting the unsatisfactory and deteriorating conditions passed without U.S. objection. The 2017 *NSS* is clear: “no nation can unilaterally alleviate all human suffering, but just because [America] cannot help everyone does not mean that [it] should stop trying to help anyone.”<sup>84</sup> For several reasons, the GLR should qualify for help.

The 2017 *NSS* does not explicitly state the concept of *R2P* as clearly as the two previous versions, but does vow that “[America] will not remain silent in the face of evil.”<sup>85</sup> The *NSS* is built on the concept of “principled realism that is guided by outcomes, not ideology.”<sup>86</sup> While that means America should act in its own best interest, it does not mean that it must act unilaterally. Furthermore, it does not suggest that

actions should only be undertaken if they benefit the United States exclusively. The last of four pillars in the *NSS* codifies achieving “better outcomes in multilateral forums” as a necessary part of advancing American influence.<sup>87</sup> As a global power with global interests, improving the performance of multilateral organizations like the UN is not an act of charity. The 2017 *NSS* still supports the core values and interests that have consistently underpinned American foreign policy. While the language has changed, the importance of being a credible actor on the international stage remains the same. Even two decades after President Clinton’s Kigali speech, the United States cannot tolerate the situation in the GLR and maintain credibility. The consistent documentation of on-going violence already undermines it to some degree. With 1994 as a guide, the potential negative outcomes of the current trajectory are knowable. In the most extreme scenario, another genocide is possible and will do irreparable harm to America’s standing in the world. Increasing America’s direct involvement and support for the UN is consistent with principled realism and does not require a liberal ideological perspective to make sense.

Contributing to the success of MONUSCO has the potential for tangible, enduring effects beyond the GLR. Effective implementation of UNSC mandates can only bolster the credibility of the UN as an organization and the United States within the UN. Failure of MONUSCO, on the other hand, will serve a considerable blow to both. It is the largest and most expensive UN peacekeeping effort underway with over 20,000 personnel deployed and an annual budget of over \$1.14 billion.<sup>88</sup> If it falls short, the rationale for relying on the UN to tackle future difficult problems would be scarce, exactly when the need for it is blossoming.

In October 2017, Secretary of Defense James Mattis directed the Department of Defense to prepare for an accelerating deterioration of a rules-based international order.<sup>89</sup> United States Joint Doctrine predicts a future plagued by “persistent disorder” and “contested norms.”<sup>90</sup> A viable and respected UN has the potential to be a force-multiplier, as it was called by the Clinton administration, to counteract those threats.<sup>91</sup> The victors of World War Two brought it into existence as, and it remains today, a body dedicated to reinforcing international norms. The United States has much to gain by underwriting the legitimacy of the UN.

### Moving Forward

The United States should decisively exploit the strategic clarity and transparency shown by recent UNSC assessments to help MONUSCO regain the initiative. The United States can uniquely bring instant credibility to the military effort. An infusion of high end capacity is necessary to break the downward spiral in the region and show political resolve. To do this, the current military lines of effort must be adjusted.

American policy focuses on regional organizations and building the capacity of individual partner nations through efforts like The Global Peace Operations Initiative and the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP).<sup>92</sup> However, there are specific problems with this method. The High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations specifically addressed the risks associated with regional peace efforts considering the “complex linkages” from local through transnational levels.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, as Kersti Larsdotter of the Swedish Defence University noted, “bi-lateral approaches in this region, which is characterized by intricate entanglements, risks disturbing the balance of power and increasing the risk of violent conflict.”<sup>94</sup> Rwanda and Uganda were among the six inaugural APRRP states, highlighting the exact problem Ms. Larsdotter

observed.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, while building partner capacity can be a strong long-term investment, if the aforementioned risks are mitigated, it does not fulfill the obligation of *R2P* and has not arrested the current negative trend.

The same positive rationale that justifies building partner capacity bilaterally also applies to building institutional capacity. Multilateral UN operations offer the opportunity to enhance the capabilities of the troop-contributing countries and foster institutional resilience. It is important to reiterate the value of American veto power on the UNSC. There is no threat to building the stature of the UN because the UNSC cannot implement any measure contrary to U.S. interests. If a bi-lateral partner elects to contradict American interests, the ability to “veto” that decision may not be as simple.

The heavy emphasis on bi-lateral relationships and building partner capacity needs to be moderated while spending additional resources to enhance the existing UN force. The United States pays over 28% of the UN peacekeeping budget, by far the largest percentage of any country, but contributes only 55 personnel to UN peacekeeping operations globally. None of the 55 serve as line troops. The total contribution to MONUSCO is 3 staff officers.<sup>96</sup> The return on such a large monetary contribution has been undermined by ineffective mission execution. A way to stop throwing good money after bad is to infuse combat power and reverse the strategic decline. That will require high quality capability, not just funding.

The U.S. military should build suitable, acceptable, and feasible military options to bolster MONUSCO decisively and publicly. The UN has enumerated several specific force requirements needed to execute its mandate. Many of these fall in categories that are traditional American strengths such as intelligence, surveillance and

reconnaissance, airlift and improved logistics support.<sup>97</sup> As a point of reference, these robust capabilities also meet the first two requirements that President Obama established as criteria for contributing U.S. personnel to a UN mission. First, they are areas where the U.S. has “specialized expertise” and second, they have the potential to “improve substantially” the UN mission.<sup>98</sup>

Another consideration should be for the United States to contribute ground combat forces. As official Army doctrine states,

[I]nserting ground troops is the most tangible and durable measure of America’s commitment to defend American interest. It signals the Nation’s intent to protect friends and deny aggression.<sup>99</sup>

That MONUSCO already has the authority to conduct offensive operations via the Intervention Brigade makes it even more plausible that U.S. troop contributions could make a meaningful difference when compared to traditional peacekeeping operations. Due to personnel and budget constraints, MONUSCO’s new operational construct of “protection through projection, as opposed to protection through presence” also increases the potential payoff for American participation.<sup>100</sup> There is no better way to assess and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of an operation than by being present. The increased complexity of information gathering, decision making, planning and execution for a power projection mission, versus a steady state presence mission is considerable. American boots on the ground could not only ensure the efficacy of the missions, but also the validity of the decision making regarding when and where MONUSCO invests its combat power.

American combat forces augmenting an already large international force will resurrect the existing credibility deficit and show the United States stands behind its values. It is also a key way to get other powerful militaries to contribute to the effort.

This motive was overtly stated in PDD-25, and implied by subsequent administrations, trumpeting the value of American leadership.<sup>101</sup>

For this to be a realistic course of action, the three fundamental hurdles will again have to be addressed. The administration will have to secure domestic and congressional support, define clear objectives with an end state, and plan to decisively achieve those objectives. The starting point for each of those themes will require robust military planning that is both sensitive to existing perceptions about the UN, and helpful in articulating the consequences of not intervening in a sufficient and timely manner. All the justifications for action have been thoughtfully codified in strategic documents since the end of the Cold War. Rwanda graphically illustrated the ramifications of failure.

#### Conclusion

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda is an important and relevant case study for the United States. The strategic conditions, disposition of the UN, and alignment of U.S. interests correlate to the contemporary situation. Now, as then, the United States has the capacity to intervene in an existing UN effort to make a meaningful difference. While mustering the political resolve to act will be difficult, continued delay will almost certainly increase the ultimate cost of intervention. In the most extreme, but not unlikely, scenario, the region could once again descend into widespread genocide. With the vast amount of information now available and clear precedent, allowing the current trajectory to continue unchecked is contrary to U.S. interests and American values. The United States should promptly invest combat power in MONUSCO to bolster the viability of the UN and reverse the security and humanitarian deterioration in the GLR. There is tremendous potential for good in the Great Lakes region and for the future of the UN, but little reason to believe it will transpire without American action.

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<sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication No. 1* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 17, 2012), 1-4, <http://data.cape.army.mil/web/repository/doctrine/adp1.pdf> (accessed December 18, 2017).

<sup>100</sup> UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Secretary-General on the Strategic Review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, 15.

<sup>101</sup> National Security Council, "PDD-25," Annex II (c).