

# AMERICAN PRESIDENTS AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES:

The Rhetorical Marginalization of Genocide in Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda

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**DEDICATION**

To my family:

Thank you for your constant support.

To Dr. Jefferson:

Thank you for believing that I could do this.

**ABSTRACT**

This project develops a new generic criticism methodology through an in-depth textual analysis of eight public statements by President Clinton during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. It also examines this methodology through in-depth textual analyses of public statements by Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, George H. W. Bush, and William Clinton regarding the Cambodian genocide (1975-79) and the Bosnian genocide (1992-95). The genre serves as an extension of Theodore Windt's International Crisis Genre and existing research on Presidential rhetoric criticism. This project also discusses the ethical and epistemic consequences of the rhetorical marginalization of genocide. Through the development of the genocide marginalization methodology, a means of studying specific mishandled humanitarian crises is made available, as is a means of more effectively dealing with domestic and international humanitarian crises in the future. In its application to two earlier genocides, the methodology appears to be applicable beyond its original circumstances.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In an analysis of public statements delivered by American Presidents on the genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, a few significant similarities and differences were apparent. To begin with, in each of the three genocides the violence arguably emerged from deep-seated ethno-political divisions. Secondly, the aggression was characterized by large-scale execution and extensive human rights abuses. The final similarity is the United States' repeated inability or unwillingness to take action against the suffering in spite of numerous promises. Beyond these circumstantial similarities, there are also significant parallels in the rhetoric surrounding each of the genocides. From these parallels, a new method of generic criticism was developed.

The American President's discourse exhibits how rhetoric can be used as minimization and justification techniques for arguably immoral political decisions. Essentially, based on the techniques articulated by Theodore Windt's (1973) International Crisis Genre, the President is able to influence the demands of the American people based on his desired outcome. By using the inherent ethos of the Presidency, an American President is able to create a crisis, which in turn motivates the American people to support potentially unfavorable policy decisions. However, this project argues that such a tactic can be used in an equally powerful way when a President wants to form a "non-crisis." Generally, this occurs when a President attempts to dissuade public demand for action.

By using diffusing language, the public becomes more willing to forgive a lack of military intervention in humanitarian crises, and the President does not appear

immoral. His rhetoric essentially removes the crisis from that categorization and urgency. It is an important and powerful tactic that, based on the analyses of the three genocides, has been used throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to avoid engaging in undesired military interventions.

Following the analysis of the different presidential statements, it appears that the dominating political and racial ideologies of the time determine the manner in which genocide is rhetorically addressed. For one, the genocide in Rwanda was referenced in presidential statements the fewest number of times and with the least expressed concern despite having the second highest death rate. On the other hand, Bosnia, which took place roughly around the same time and with fewer casualties, was given much less attention. It can be argued that the perceived racial inferiority and political inconsequentiality of Rwanda caused it to be considered 'inferior' to the European conflict in Bosnia. It must then be considered why Cambodia received as much attention as it did, since the Khmer people were not of European descent either. It can be argued in response that the ideology of the Cold War was so influential in American politics at the time that the genocide became much less an issue of human rights abuses and much more about the prevention of the development of a larger Communist Bloc.

There are also fundamental differences in the Presidents' ultimate goal when delivering his rhetorical statements for the different genocides. The rhetorical choices the President makes depends upon what action he is trying to persuade a certain audience to take. For example, in his statements regarding Cambodia, President Ford outwardly attempts to persuade Congress to provide military and economic assistance for the democratic Khmer government. Conversely, during the Rwandan genocide,

President Clinton attempts to dissuade the public from demanding military action, as was also the case in Bosnia. This begs the question, then, whether President Ford was actually concerned with the wellbeing of the Cambodian people or using rhetoric, like President Clinton and President H. W. Bush, to influence particular actions. At the same time, the fact that the Presidential statements were delivered publicly indicates that they are also appealing to national emotions to buoy their argument and ultimately the desired course of action.

In all cases, it is clear that the concern expressed in the presidential statements is essentially a manifestation of political and cultural biases of the time. Despite consistent sympathetic rhetoric and the expressed desire to alleviate the situation, the public statements seem to instead embody the political aspirations of the United States, and the promises appear largely empty.

Over the course of the next hundred pages, this project will; (1) explore previous scholarship on Presidential wartime and crisis rhetoric; (2) discuss the elements and techniques used to create rhetorical genres; (3) expand upon key elements of the rhetorical marginalization genre; (4) explicate the background and conditions leading to the Cambodian genocide (1975-1979) and examine the genocide marginalization genre through an analysis of Presidential statements delivered during the crisis; (5) explicate the background and conditions leading to the Bosnian genocide (1992-1995) and examine the genocide marginalization genre through an analysis of Presidential statements delivered during the crisis; (6) explicate the background and conditions leading to the Rwandan genocide (1994) and develop the genocide marginalization genre through the analysis of Presidential statements delivered during the crisis; (7)

discuss the ethical and epistemic consequences of American President's rhetorical marginalization of genocide; and (8) discuss the significance of expanding on previous generic criticism methodologies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND CRISIS RHETORIC

During his tenure in office, an American President is inevitably faced with crises, both domestic and international. Traditionally, there are acceptable ways for him to respond and there are certain ways in which it is not. While there has been rather extensive research conducted on the President of the United States and his response to international crises surrounding the ideology of the Cold War, there has been surprisingly little done on the Presidential response to international humanitarian issues. This research is going to demonstrate the necessity of learning how to more effectively deal with domestic and international humanitarian crises in the future.

#### International Crises

There is a fair amount of scholarship on presidential foreign policy rhetoric, especially focusing on the discourse surrounding public policy decisions. American culture and the structure of common sense help shape the agency and rhetorical power of the Presidential office. However, when it comes to effectively convincing the public of potentially controversial policy choices, specific rhetorical strategies are generally employed. The purpose of this traditional crisis rhetoric is to generally gain support for military offensive against a set enemy.

Presidential foreign policy rhetoric is largely based on the American public's perception of political reality. Explicitly, as D. Ray Heisey (1986) conveys in his piece, "Reagan and Mitterrand Respond to International Crisis: Creating Versus Transcending Appearances," much of international crisis rhetoric is shaped around the public's pre-existing values and beliefs. A key component of international crisis rhetoric is the

concept of “rallying ‘round the flag,” or a call for the public’s patriotic duty to support the President’s policy decisions. The effectiveness of this strategy depends on the presentation of the crisis to the public through the media, bipartisan support, and the administration’s statements. These strategies offer little opportunity for the general public to form its own opinion, as the media and Presidential discourse give only one perspective. This is, however, not to say that Americans are passive observers, but such morally compelling strategies do compromise objective decision-making. Baker & Oneal (2001), in their article “Patriotism or Opinion Leadership?: The Nature and Origins of the ‘Rally ‘Round the Flag’ Effect,” emphasize the significance of this strategy specifically by the United States government.

The rhetoric of President John F. Kennedy has been frequently studied, particularly his rhetoric surrounding the Cold War. In his discourse, Kennedy repeatedly positions himself as a legitimate leader in order to counteract any public criticism of Cold War policy choices. Specifically, as Bostdorff & Goldzwig (1994) articulate in their article “Idealism and Pragmatism in American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Case of John F. Kennedy and Vietnam,” Kennedy’s discourse on Vietnam demonstrates his careful balancing of ideology and pragmatic arguments. Similarly, Thomas Benson (2004) looks at the way in which Kennedy uses media to persuade the public that his crises and policies are legitimate during the Bay of Pigs crisis, in his book *Writing JFK: Presidential Rhetoric and the Press in The Bay of Pigs Crisis*.

In Eran N. Ben-Porath’s (2007) work “Rhetoric of Atrocities: The Place of Horrific Human Rights Abuses in Presidential Persuasion Effort,” an analysis of

presidential rhetoric in post-Cold War America calls out certain rhetorical choices a president traditionally makes when attempting to persuade the American people to support or refute specific policies. When looking to rally the population behind a position, Ben-Porath argues a president will choose to focus on personalized and vivid stories of atrocities, specifically rape, torture and violence against children. Conversely, Ben-Porath argues, when trying to dissuade, a president will shy away from these narratives and focus instead on abstract concepts and statistics.

In the article “Bill Clinton's ‘New Partnership’ Anecdote: Toward a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy Rhetoric,” Jason Edwards & Joseph Valenzano (2007) also focus on post-Cold War presidential rhetoric, specifically that of President Bill Clinton. According to their work, Clinton created what is called the “new partnership” narrative during a trip to Africa in 1998. The three themes in this narrative are (1) America's role as world leader, (2) reconstituting the threat environment, and (3) democracy promotion as the strategy for American foreign policy. These themes were echoed within his foreign policy rhetoric for the remainder of his presidency.

Carol Winkler's (2007) work, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric: Reagan on Libya; Bush on Iraq,” demonstrates that the public discourse strategies employed by the Bush administration on the ‘War on Terror’ still fit the Cold War model. Despite changes in the exigencies of American warfare, Washington continues to rely on strategic misrepresentation in order to conform to the genre as well as to gain favorable public opinion. In fact, as Richard Brody (2000) discusses in his article “International Crises and Public Support for President Clinton: United Nations’ Arms Inspections in

Iraq,” the Bush administration still uses rhetorical national security threats to increase public support for his ‘counterterrorist’ policies.

### Domestic Crises

In domestic politics, political leaders have the tendency to keep certain aspects of their decisions out of the public realm. Matthew Baum (2004) argues in his article “Public Opinion, Presidential Rhetoric, and the Domestic Politics of Audience Costs in U.S. Foreign Policy Crises” that, despite the advantages of political transparency, politicians tend to opt for a “black box” model of governmental policies instead. There are two primary reasons behind this decision; first, there is the fear that decisions or statements might be criticized and therefore jeopardize their political future, and second, domestic ‘audiences’ (the American public) may react unexpectedly to the policy choice.

On the other hand, research by David Domke, Erica Graham, & Kevin Coe (2006) in the article “Going Public as Political Strategy: The Bush Administration, an Echoing Press, and Passage of the Patriot Act,” argues that “going public” has in fact become a more modern rhetorical choice for American presidents, as demonstrated by President George W. Bush in the aftermath of September 11. In this case, the president utilized the ability to influence the media not to suppress information, but in fact to publicize information about the Patriot Act that would serve to garner support for their “anti-terrorist” policies.

Although the majority of crisis criticism concerns international issues, domestic crises are also important studies of Presidential rhetoric. Presidents have often mismanaged American humanitarian crises and President Bush’s mishandling of

Hurricane Katrina is no different. Hurricane Katrina, in August 2005, was one of the largest natural disasters America has ever experienced. As B. F. Liu (2007) argues in the article “President Bush's Major Post-Katrina Speeches: Enhancing Image Repair Discourse Theory Applied to the Public Sector,” the Bush Administration in general, and the President in particular, failed in dealing with the crisis.

During Katrina, Littlefield and Quenette’s (2007) article, “Crisis Leadership and Hurricane Katrina: The Portrayal of Authority by the Media in Natural Disasters,” points out that the media actually deviated from its traditional role and helped shape the negative public opinion towards Bush. The widespread suffering in New Orleans that followed Katrina presented President Bush with a domestic humanitarian crisis. However, Bush waited for weeks before delivering a speech to the people and despite promises of change, the devastation is still apparent two years later. It is necessary to extend Presidential rhetoric research so as to develop ways to improve the mishandling that is characteristic of domestic crises.

### GENOCIDE RHETORIC

While the majority of academic research on presidential rhetoric focuses on international military crises, there is surprisingly little work that addresses international or even national humanitarian crises. At the same time, the small amount of research that does exist still leaves room for expansion and innovation in the area. In particular, works that look at rhetoric surrounding ethnic cleansing and genocide generally focus on the media and public opinion rather than leadership rhetoric. While media certainly is an important factor, it is necessary to expand this research into other powerful and influential areas of rhetoric.

Rhetorical critics frequently focus on mass media because it is a powerful rhetorical tool often used by the political and social elite to influence public opinion or action. In terms of genocide rhetoric, it often plays a pivotal role in the perpetuation of the violence and ignorance. In Rwanda, in particular, the media was incredibly influential both within the country as well as in the international community. In his article "Of Hate and Genocide," John Simon (2006) looks at the way in which media suppression negatively impacted any legitimate means of raising awareness about the violence. At the same time, in a study by Yaeli Block-Elkon (2007), "Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992-1995," an integrative model of the media, public opinion, and foreign policy relations over the course of international crises is applied to the Bosnian genocide. This research studies headlines from major news sources as well as public opinion polls and concludes that there are strong correlations between the two. While this study highlights the media's shifting role throughout a crisis, it does not factor in speech by influential individuals and therefore draws no conclusion about its correlation to the two.

The research conducted by Stephen Bennett and Richard Flickinger (1997) presented in the article "American Public Opinion and the Civil War in Bosnia" focuses on post-Cold War attitudes toward foreign policy issues by also observing American public opinion surrounding the Bosnian genocide (1992-96). Again, the primary focus of the study is media coverage surrounding the crisis and the manner in which this shapes public opinion. The study uncovers that the more knowledgeable an American citizen was about the civil war, the more they sympathized with the targets of the

genocide, the Bosnian Muslims. At the same time, however, support for controversial aggressive U.S. foreign policy options was mixed regardless of knowledge level. This research ultimately indicates that the American public does become interested in foreign affairs through the media, but for uncertain periods of time.

The genocide currently plaguing Darfur, Sudan is also a focus of much research, including work on the term 'genocide' and how it has affected the international community's treatment of the continuing violence. Work by Alex De Waal (2006), "Defining Genocide," acknowledges the perplexing nature of the violence and argues that the U.S.'s decision to label it 'genocide' brought it into the international sphere and has at the same time lowered the bar of American interventionism. Research by Darren Brunk (2008), "Dissecting Darfur: Anatomy of a Genocide Debate," also focuses on the violence in Darfur and how it has been labeled as genocide by much of the international community. Brunk argues, however, that this acknowledgement as genocide has less to do with the nature of the violence as it does with the international community's memory of the failure in the 1994 Rwanda genocide. However, regardless of this perception, little has been done to address the mass killings still taking place.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GENERIC CRITICISM DEFINED

Genre, as a form of rhetorical criticism, is a somewhat contemporary academic development. Despite its roots in early rhetoric, specific standards of generic methodology were not formally composed until the late-1950s. Northrup Frye (1957) is considered to be one of the most significant authors to address the topic of generic criticism. According to his work, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957), genres are rooted in both formal and situational correlations. He emphasizes specifically the importance of studying discourses to find similar ‘communicable’ forms, through which feelings and experiences are conveyed (Frye, 1957).

Edwin Black (1965) was the first critic to explicitly discuss the use of generic studies as a method of criticism. His work demonstrated a shift away from neo-Aristotelian criticism to a more expansive rhetorical analysis. In his book, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (1965), Black criticizes traditional critical methodologies as unable to study historical and textual recurrences, and discusses genre as a possible alternative approach. In defining what is meant by genre studies, Black argues that generic criticism presumes, “there is a limited number of situations in which a rhetor can find himself [and] a limited number of situations in which [he] can and will respond rhetorically to any given situational type” (Black, 1965, p. 35). With this, he is suggesting that there are both likenesses between different pieces of rhetoric as well as the existence of generic groupings

Karlyn Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson (1978) are also early writers on generic criticism and some of the most prominent critics of political rhetoric. Their

work explores the nature and composition of genre as a category of rhetorical criticism. According to their book, *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action* (1978), a genre is created through the identification of affinities in certain pieces of rhetoric. Specifically, there must be similar “substantive and stylistic forms chosen to respond to situational requirements” (p. 18), or more simply put, corresponding rhetorical strategies in different discourses. These strategies exist only based on the audience’s perception. As one of the more expansive methodologies, there are many different focuses of generic criticism. For the purpose of this paper, the methods centralized around persuasive political rhetoric are the most important.

#### INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GENRE: A BASIS FOR SHIFT

In an early article by Bonnie Dow (1989), “The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric,” she evaluates Cherwitz and Zagacki’s perspective on Windt’s International Crises Genre. They argue that crisis speeches fall into two categories, either consummatory or justificatory. However, Dow argues that their work overlooks the influence of differing circumstances that actually produce crisis rhetoric and therefore cannot explain the function of the rhetoric fully. Dow uses three speeches made by President Reagan in the early- to mid-1980s to illustrate the importance of understanding how different exigencies give rise to specific rhetorical responses and how rhetoric responds. In her article, Dow discusses different functions performed by crisis rhetoric as produced by certain situations.

Windt argues that certain aspects of the office give the President the ability to create a ‘crisis.’ It can be argued that these same principals can be used to understand a President’s successful marginalization of international humanitarian issues. In the

public statements delivered around the three genocides, the President is similarly attempting to convince the American public of a controversial policy. The difference, then, is only in the specific rhetorical strategies and the intended audience reaction. At the same time, Windt argues that a President has access to privileged information and is perceived as being most knowledgeable about a crisis. Therefore, through the Presidents' refusal to ever qualify the violence as genocide, the American public comes under the assumption that this is the truth.

In his book *Presidents and Protesters: Political Rhetoric in the 1960s*, Theodore Windt (1990) argues that Presidential rhetoric is often used to give “political meaning to events that might otherwise be seen or interpreted outside a political context” (p. 4). Theodore Windt (1990) argues that a President will define an event or situation as a ‘crisis’ by positioning it as ‘critical’ to the continued superiority of the United States. More explicitly, “they contend that the situation requires decisive action and call upon Congress and the public for full support” (p. 5). Generally, a President can count on public support for controversial policies once he defines a situation as critical. In sum, then, Theodore Windt (1990) reveals, “a ‘crisis’ that does not involve a direct external military attack on the United States is a political event rhetorically created by the president in which the public predictably rallies to his defense” (p. 6)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GENOCIDE MARGINALIZATION GENRE

In developing the genocide marginalization genre, three major elements were established through the analysis of President Clinton's rhetoric surrounding the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Together, these three elements create a "non-crisis" for the American public through the use of diffusing language. This is accomplished based on the assumptions of the President's fundamental rhetorical power, namely that the President is able to convince the public that a crisis does not exist when it is in fact an urgent matter. This project looks at the development of a rhetorical "non-crisis" in the area of genocide.

The first element of the genocide marginalization genre is what can be called the "It's Typical" argument. Essentially, this line of argument establishes that the violence within the country is characteristic of its backwardness and ingrained in its history. By framing the conflict as a tradition of violence, the implication is that the United States cannot be expected to repair long-standing divisions. It is also established that the genocide, however tragic, is typical of that country's people and nature. The President uses specific rhetorical strategies to emphasize the backwardness and historical violence of the country engaged in genocide. Within this same line of argument, there is also the discussion of the country's inability to adopt American ideals of freedom and democracy, which essentially becomes a "they got what they deserved" justification of inaction. All this is accompanied by promises of immediate, but vague, action, which typically turn up empty.

The establishment of a smaller, more manageable crisis that the United States is able to 'solve' characterizes the second primary line of argument. However, this rhetorical strategy generally discounts the continuation of the genocide. Each small crisis varies depending on the specific genocide, but the basic concept remains the same. In some cases, this is characterized by the emphasis of more pressing issues and the redirection of blame, such as the prevention of expanding Communist influence. By quickly and efficiently resolving this new issue, the American public is placated for the time being, having been satisfied by a small but tangible solution, even if the problem is not the most significant one. It is generally quite effective because it allows the American public the opportunity to feel relief from guilt while absolving the President from engaging in potentially undesirable military interventions.

The third major element of the genocide marginalization genre, and arguably the most significant, is the President's rhetorical dismissal of the American public's moral responsibility. In this line of argument, the President uses specific rhetorical strategies to redefine the conflicts so as to decrease the moral impact of the term 'genocide.' Specifically, the genocides are repeatedly redefined as a "situation," or as other equally innocuous terms. In this way, the American public feels less of a need to rectify the violence, whereas the term genocide incites an immediate and powerful moral reaction. This can be considered a dangerous and fascinating rhetorical element since it deemphasizes humanitarian crises to such a point that military intervention can be avoided and the public feels comfortable with the continuation of genocide. This rhetorical dismissal of moral responsibility is also accomplished through general implications of the crisis' insignificance.

The genocide marginalization genre was originally developed through an in-depth textual analysis of eight public statements delivered by President Clinton during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. While President Clinton's discourse only addresses one specific incident of genocide marginalization, it can be argued that it represents what Northrup Frye (1957), in his book *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, calls a strong potentiality for a genre. It was therefore necessary to examine the validity of the genre through an analysis of public statements surrounding other instances of genocide. The most prominent examples, and therefore the clearest choices for comparison, are Pol Pot's genocidal government in Cambodia (1975-1979) and the widespread massacres in Bosnia (1992-1995). Since there are similarities between these humanitarian crises and the Rwandan genocide, it is expected that the rhetorical responses would be comparable as well. These genocides will be examined through the genocide marginalization genre in chronological order.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE (1975-1979)

From 1975 to 1979, the people of Cambodia were subjected to mass killings and widespread oppression. An estimated 1.7 million people, twenty-one percent of the country's population at the time, were exterminated under the Khmer Rouge regime. It has come to be considered one of the worst humanitarian atrocities in the last hundred years (Kiernan, 1997). As with other genocides in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge largely justified and explained this complete disregard for human life with ethnic and religious prejudices. While instability in the country's past and deeply dividing ethnic opposition certainly aided the four-year genocide, Western influences exacerbated the situation and acted as what can be considered a catalyst for the mass murder by the Khmer Rouge regime.

This chapter will (1) explicate the background and conditions leading to the Cambodian genocide (1975-1979); (2) analyze President Gerald Ford's discourse surrounding the genocide using Theodore Windt's (1973) International Crisis Genre; and (3) examine the genocide marginalization genre through an analysis of President Jimmy Carter's rhetoric.

#### A Troubled Past

Historically, Cambodia has seen its share of violence, instability, civil war, and ethnic conflict. Over the past five hundred years alone, there has been constant change in political and religious leadership. Specifically, as Benjamin Kiernan (2004) observes in "Recovering History and Justice in Cambodia," "Hindu, Buddhist, royalist, republican, colonial and communist regimes came and went" (p. 77) during this half

millennium. In the past sixty years alone Cambodia saw seven regime changes and three foreign power occupations. Unfortunately, up until recently, many historical records and documents had been destroyed when regimes shifted, leaving little to detail Cambodia's history (Cook, 2006).

Beginning in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, extensive ethnic violence plagued Cambodia, lead by the government in power. Exemplary of this hostility, the Khmer king, Ang Snguon, gave “orders or permission to massacre all the Cochinchine [Vietnamese] who could be found, and this order was executed very precisely and very cruelly” (Kiernan, 2004, p. 78). This extensive and methodical ethnic cleansing lasted approximately six weeks and resulted in an unspecified number of deaths. Sarah Cook (2006), in her book *The Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese Communists*, reports that, for the next century, ethnic conflicts continued to rage across Cambodia. Most notably, Thailand violently seized territory in the western Angkor region while Vietnam constantly pushed in the east.

In 1863, Vietnam was made a French colony and Cambodia subsequently became a Protectorate. While the colonialists did restore some of Cambodia's traditional territory and shifted the Khmer capital to Phnom Penh, they routinely neglected education, resulting in falling literacy rates and only 144 Khmer university graduates in a century. A suppression of Khmer-language historical works, and any publications of substantial academic pieces, continued during this time and into later regimes (Kiernan, 2004).

### The Rise of Pol Pot

In 1925, Pol Pot was born in central Cambodia as Saloth Sar to a middle class farming family. At the age of 20, he was given a scholarship to study radio electronics in Paris. Upon his arrival, however, he became so consumed in learning Marxist ideology that he neglected his studies and eventually lost the scholarship. In 1953 when he returned to Cambodia, Pol Pot immediately joined and became prominent in the underground Communist movement. Cambodia became fully independent from France the following year and soon came under monarchical rule (Kiernan, 2002; Kiernan, 1997).

According to the United Human Rights Council (2006), Norodom Sihanouk, the Prince of Cambodia from 1954 to 1970, had an adverse opinion of the Cambodian Communist Party and took steps to dismantle it. By 1962, Pol Pot had become the group's leader and Sihanouk's efforts had forced them to retreat to the jungle. While in hiding, Pol Pot was able to form an armed resistance movement that came to be known as the Khmer Rouge, meaning Red Cambodians. Throughout Sihanouk's regime, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge engaged in guerilla warfare against the government, but was ironically not responsible for his ultimate downfall.

In 1970, Sihanouk was ousted not by Pol Pot but instead by a "U.S.-backed right-wing military coup" which put General Lon Nol into power (Cook, 2006, p. 50). Unfortunately, this only acted to drive the former enemies together. Sihanouk, who formerly had vehemently opposed the Khmer Rouge, joined Pol Pot in challenging the military government that had replaced him.

### The Role of the U.S.

During the 1960s, U.S. forces began to involve themselves in Vietnam's war. Prince Sihanouk attempted to maintain neutrality, but once he was ousted in 1970, "several contending armies, Vietnamese and American," began to pour into Cambodia (Kiernan, 2004, p. 77). It became what has been referred to as "a theater of the Vietnam War," and a target for American military efforts (UHRC, 2006).

From October 4, 1965 to August 15, 1973, the United States dropped an estimated 2,756,941 tons of artillery on Cambodia, roughly ten percent of which was done indiscriminately. The civilian casualties caused by this bombing campaign are staggering. According to Taylor Owen and Benjamin Kiernan's (2006) article "Bombs Over Cambodia," the U.S.'s "unverified official estimate of 50,000" should be considered a minimum, with the reality at upwards of 150,000 innocent lives lost.

In May and June of 1970, U.S and South Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia. Their goal was to exorcise the North Vietnamese Communists from border encampments. However, these efforts only "drove them deeper into Cambodia where they allied themselves with the Khmer Rouge" (UHRC, 2006). After this failure, U.S. military plans shifted to covert air attacks against the internal Viet Cong camps. In fact, in December of 1970, President Nixon said in a discussion with Henry Kissinger, "a plan where every goddamn thing that can fly goes into Cambodia and hits every target that is open...everything. I want them to use the big planes, the small planes, everything they can" (Owen & Kiernan, 2006, p. 66).

The impact of U.S. actions is staggering, as civilian casualties caused by blanket bombing have been credited with the Khmer Rouge rise to power. The populace had not

previously supported the insurgency, but having been enraged by U.S. violence, threw their support behind it. It set into motion “the expansion of the Vietnam War deeper into Cambodia, a *coup d’etat* in 1970, the rapid rise of the Khmer Rouge, and ultimately the Cambodian genocide” (Owen & Kiernan, 2006, p. 63). This buoying of Pol Pot’s vicious regime continued during the genocide, as “Washington, Beijing, and Bangkok all supported the continued independent existence of the Khmer Rouge regime” as it was to their geopolitical advantage (Kiernan, 2006, p. 78). Specifically, in the final stages of the genocide, these governments found it favorable for the Cambodian regime to continue its resistance of Hanoi and North Vietnamese influence.<sup>1</sup>

### Tensions Building

Throughout the U.S. bombing campaign, the Khmer Rouge targeted political and ethnic groups with accelerated “cleansing” campaigns. In 1973-74, Pol Pot’s “Party Center” clandestinely and systematically murdered nearly all one thousand Khmer communists returning from training in Hanoi (UHRC, 2006). Following this, Pol Pot also increased violence against Vietnamese civilians living in Cambodia, along with other ethnic minority groups and different regional members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). Pol Pot’s group banned, repressed and murdered a number of other

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<sup>1</sup> Kenton, C. (2003). Jimmy Carter, human rights, and Cambodia. *Diplomatic History*, 27(2), 245-278.

“With human rights a primary concern during the Jimmy Carter presidency, the administration's lack of concern for the human rights abuses of the Khmer Rouge regime is paradoxical”... There are a few reasons attributed to this hypocrisy: “(1) the American desire to retreat from Southeast Asia after its debacle in Vietnam; (2) the feeling that US efforts to stop the atrocities would be powerless; & (3) US attention to other issues. The foremost reasons for US inaction were geopolitical considerations in US relations with the USSR & the People's Republic of China as championed by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Tragically, when the Vietnamese drove the Khmer Rouge from power during its invasion of 1978, the US took steps to assist the remaining Khmer Rouge military forces. The US also refused to interfere with the Chinese limited invasion of Vietnam & its resuscitation of the Khmer Rouge.”

religious groups and even more moderate communists. In 1975, for example, Hou Yuon, a respected and popular Paris-educated intellectual who had held a more moderate view of Marxism than Pol Pot, was assassinated (Duong, 2006).

#### The Democratic Republic of Kampuchea (DK)

In April 1975, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge took advantage of the Cambodian government's volatile state, made worse by U.S. military actions, and marched on Phnom Penh. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, Pol Pot's army, comprised mostly of young peasant guerrilla fighters, emerged victorious, naming the new communist regime the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea (DK) (Kiernan, 2004).

Once he had established the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea, Pol Pot began "a radical experiment to create an agrarian utopia" modeled on Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (UHRC, 2006). Pol Pot began this experiment by declaring 1975 as "Year Zero," indicating the initiation of a new era, and warning that society would begin to be "purified," meaning all forms of Westernization, including culture and religion, would be abandoned for a severe kind of peasant Communism. As Benjamin Kiernan's (2002) explains in his article "Conflict in Cambodia, 1945-2002," the Khmer Rouge "hunted down, rounded up, and killed thousands of defeated Khmer Republic officials, army officers, and increasingly, soldiers, school teachers, and alleged "pacification agents"" (p. 486).

Foreign nationals were driven out along with any form of foreign economic or medical assistance. All forms of communication and capitalism were systematically silenced, particularly if they had ties to the West, and all "religion [was] banned, education halted, health care eliminated, and parental authority revoked" (UHRC,

2006). Cambodia was now wholly sealed off from the rest of the world, having isolated itself “internally and externally... human communication was reduced to daily instructions” (Kiernan, 1997, p. 337).

Immediately following its rise to power, the Khmer Rouge began to empty “Cambodia’s cities into the countryside, persecuting and murdering the deported townspeople” along the way (Kiernan, 2004, p. 80). In the purging of Phnom Penh, upwards of 20,000 civilians died before even reaching the countryside. The term “killing fields” emerged once the remaining civilians, previously accustomed to urban living, began work on the land. Pol Pot’s forced slave labor took a massive toll on the survivors. The hours and working conditions were inhumane. Starving workers were forced to watch as an entire day’s worth of crops were carted off without having a single bite. Millions began dying from “overwork, malnutrition and disease,” aided by an insufficient diet of beans and rice every two days (UHRC, 2006).

Over the next four years, Pol Pot’s regime conducted deadly purges throughout Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge drove out 150,000 Vietnamese, killing anyone remaining, and carried out genocide against both Muslim and Chinese minorities (Kiernan, 2002). Approximately fifty percent of Chinese residents were killed, while Muslims were forced at gunpoint to consume pork and were killed if they refused (Kiernan, 2004).

The Khmer Rouge also waged war against the country’s history by scattering libraries, burning books, closing schools, and murdering schoolteachers. In fact, “three-quarters of Cambodia’s 20,000 teachers perished, or fled abroad” during that time (Kiernan, 2004, p. 80). The regime even began to commit genocide against the Khmer Buddhist monkhood, which had traditionally been the “bearers of cultural literacy”

(Kiernan, 2004, p. 80). This was all done with the purpose of eliminating everything that reminisced of the “old society.” Even ex-soldiers, along with their families, were murdered, and anyone suspected of disloyalty to the regime or to Pol Pot was “shot or bludgeoned with an ax” (UHRC, 2006). Many of the Khmer Rouge leaders fell victim to this fate. Traditional family life was likewise destroyed, as children were removed from parents, placed into communes, and eventually married off in mass (Kiernan, 2004). The Democratic Republic of Kampuchea’s slogan became *kchat kchay os roling*, translated as both “scatter them to the last” and “what is rotten must be removed” (UHRC, 2006).

The Khmer Rouge also launched cross-border attacks beginning in 1977, most fervently against Vietnam but also against Thailand and Laos. By 1979, Hanoi in Vietnam had gathered strength through exiled resistance fighters and was fueled by the repeated military offensives. On January 7, 1979 the Communist army invaded Cambodia and successfully overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime (Cook, 2006). Pol Pot was deposed when Phnom Penh fell and a puppet government was installed in his place. For the next seventeen years, Pol Pot’s resistance army continued to fight against the Cambodian government from Thailand, but finally lost control in the 1990s (Kiernan, 2002). After his arrest but before his trial in front of an International tribunal, Pol Pot died in prison of an alleged heart attack in April 1998 (Kiernan, 2004).

### **Significant Time Lapse**

In an attempt to examine the validity of the genocide marginalization as generic criticism, an extensive textual analysis was conducted on the substantive and stylistic characteristics of eight pieces of political rhetoric. Using the Web site *The American*

*Presidency Project*, a search was conducted for public statements delivered by President Gerald Ford and President Jimmy Carter over the period of 1975-1979 that mentioned or directly addressed the genocide in Cambodia. This was done with the purpose of contrasting the political rhetoric with the timeline of genocide. There were eight statements in total delivered between 1975 and 1979 that were analyzed for the purpose of this paper.<sup>2</sup>

A particularly interesting aspect of the Presidents' public statements surrounding the Cambodian genocide is the time delay between President Ford's final significant piece of rhetoric and President Carter's first. In fact, there was a three-year period between Ford's April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1975 statement and Carter's April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1978 statement. During the interim, essentially the only mention of Cambodia came in reference to American military involvement and failure there during the Vietnam War, ignoring the growing death toll of the continuing genocide. At the same time, once the Democratic Republic fell to the Khmer Rouge regime, there was a sharp drop in presidential rhetoric on the topic. Between April 1975 and 1978, presidential public statements were limited to mandatory updates on the status of Cambodian refugees.

Equally noteworthy, Jimmy Carter had been the sitting president for nearly a year and four months by the time he delivered any significant rhetoric on the conflict. Specifically, it was until his October 24<sup>th</sup> statement when he argued that America "must

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<sup>2</sup> Timeline of Significant Statements on Cambodia:

1. **January 28, 1975:** Gerald R. Ford
2. **February 25, 1975:** Gerald R. Ford
3. **April 16, 1975:** Gerald R. Ford.
4. **April 21, 1978:** Jimmy Carter
5. **December 6, 1978:** Jimmy Carter
6. **October 24, 1979:** Jimmy Carter
7. **November 13, 1979:** Jimmy Carter
8. **December 6, 1979:** Jimmy Carter

act swiftly” despite the considerably long delay between the beginning of the genocide and the delivery of his statement. His hesitation is particularly significant considering his solid human rights platform that largely characterized his Presidency despite having clearly avoided the growing death toll in Cambodia for quite some time. In fact, it appears that the majority of Ford and Carter’s public statements on the genocide were delivered directly prior to or towards the very end of the five-year genocide. This avoidance of directly addressing the genocide while it unfolded is indicative of the general disassociation the rhetoric sought to form.

## PRESIDENT FORD & CAMBODIA

While in office, it has been argued that the American President has set rhetorical choices, which are appropriate for certain situations (Windt, 1973). Specifically, there are certain fundamental lines of argument that the President must use in situations where military intervention is unfavorable. According to Theodore Windt's book, *Presidents and Protesters: Political Rhetoric in the 1960s* (1990):

Genre analysis of the public discourse requires the critic to elucidate the various...lines of argument that constitute and define that genre to understand the politics and psychologies that inform those [lines of argument] (p. xi).

For genocide marginalization genre, these rhetorical strategies function to alleviate public demand for military action during times of morally compelling crises. However, a “non-crisis” is not in fact established through President Ford's rhetoric.

The lines of argument used in President Gerald Ford's rhetoric on the Cambodian genocide indicate that his primary concern lay not with the prevention of humanitarian atrocities, but instead with the prevention of Communist expansion. While President Ford does not in fact employ the elements of the genocide marginalization genre, the elements of Theodore Windt's (1973) International Crisis Genre appear in his rhetoric, albeit with exceptions. Ford's rhetoric both compliments and contradicts what has traditionally been the pattern for Presidential rhetoric on unfavorable policy decisions.

An analysis of President Ford's public statements on the Cambodian genocide reveals that his rhetoric largely follows Theodore Windt's (1973) International Crisis Genre. It appears, in fact, that the principal distinction is the issue on which he is focusing. Specifically, Windt's genre generally applies when a President is attempting

to justify controversial policies on military action. However, in Cambodia Ford was not justifying a questionable decision but rather attempting to stir up emotions to support the implementation of one. In this instance, he is requesting additional monetary aid and military resources to help the democratic Khmer Republic defeat contending Communist forces.

As discussed earlier, Theodore Windt's (1973) *International Crisis Genre* illustrates three basic lines of argument that a President typically uses when attempting to convince the American people of a controversial policy decision. Specifically, Windt argues a President will; (1) use the inherent credibility of the presidency to demonstrate a command over 'New Facts'; (2) create a clear demarcation of good (U.S) vs. evil; and (3) emphasize the 'bear any burden' concept to inspire public support of his decision.

In his public statements during the early stages of the Cambodian genocide, President Ford's rhetoric generally follows the lines of argument put forth in Theodore Windt's (1973) *International Crisis Genre*. However, his rhetorical choices do delineate from this model in one specific way: he does not explicitly request support of a military political decision to fight Communism, but instead President Ford shrouds the geopolitical objective with humanitarian appeals. For President Ford in the 1970s, what was 'critical' was the survival of democratic forms of government in Southeast Asia and the prevention of an expanding Communist bloc.

Ultimately, however, when his efforts to convince Congress and the American public of the validity of his requests fail and the Khmer Rouge triumph, he no longer champions the country's cause despite the majority of humanitarian violations occurring after that time. His final statement, delivered on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1975, states that he "views

the fall of the Khmer Republic with sadness and compassion” and expresses his “admiration of the Cambodian Government leaders and people, who showed great courage,” but the issue appears to no longer be of urgent concern.

### **Cambodia’s “Needs”**

The first element of international crisis discourse, according to Theodore Windt (1973), is a President’s demonstrated command over ‘New Facts’ about a situation, reinforcing the public’s perception that his access to privileged information gives him moral authority. Through this assertion of control, and the “acknowledgement that the New Facts which occasion the speech constitute” a crisis (p. 128), the President leverages the inherent ethos of the Presidency and exploits the rhetorical nature of a crisis to persuade the public to support his political decision. In order to demonstrate this command, the President must present ‘unmistakable evidence’ (p. 128) to the public supporting these Facts, which often is accomplished through referencing government and military officials.

In his early public statements on the Cambodian genocide, President Ford repeatedly reports on facts about both Cambodia’s current condition and the exact amount of assistance needed in the region. Specifically, in his January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1975 statement, he cites “casualty figures” to demonstrate the Vietnamese and Cambodians efforts against the Khmer Rouge insurgents. He also states, that “regrettably, there has been no progress” despite this effort, and in fact, “the Communists have intensified hostilities by attacking on the outskirts of Phnom Penh and attempting to cut the land and water routes.” The President requests an increase of military aid in Cambodia to \$222 million, citing specific uses for the funds. He argues, the increase “is necessary to

enable us to provide vital commodities, mostly food...and to prevent the economic collapse of the country” and also that he understands the dire “consequences of refusing them this assistance.” In his February 25<sup>th</sup> statement, President Ford again demonstrates his superior knowledge, arguing “the Government forces will be forced, within weeks, to surrender to the insurgents” if the monetary assistance is not provided.

This citing of specific ‘New Facts’ is intended to establish the President as a moral authority. It is through this demonstrated command over privileged information, specifically facts and needs surrounding the unfolding genocide in Cambodia, that President Ford attempts to establish a humanitarian crisis to mask his actual geopolitical motivations, specifically the prevention of expanded Communist influence in Southeast Asia.

### **Warring Ideologies**

The second element of Theodore Windt’s genre argues that, after establishing demonstrated ‘control’ over the ‘crisis,’ the President typically begins a narration of the New Facts, which eventually transitions into the use of angel-devil terms. In doing so, “melodrama replaces politics” (p. 129). Consistent with this second element, President Ford’s public statements repeatedly contrast the Communist forces in Cambodia with the democratic Khmer Republic through the use of polarizing terms. This is particularly effective since, according to Windt (1990), presidential rhetoric “must draw on values and concerns widely shared and easily understood by the audiences” (p.14).

Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the United States focused much of its attention and resources on anti-communist efforts in Southeast Asia. The Vietnam War (1959-75) was a particularly significant and controversial aspect of this struggle, and heavily

influenced U.S. foreign policy in the subsequent administrations. While this unpopular war raged overseas, an ideological battle continued at home. The rhetoric surrounding the Cold War was constantly used to frame Communism as destructive and democracy as the ultimate good. From 1949 to the late-1980s, U.S. Presidents frequently utilized this rhetoric when attempting to persuade the American people to support controversial policies. Consistent with this trend, the rhetoric and actions surrounding the genocide in Cambodia were largely influenced by both the Cold War and the U.S. failure in Vietnam.

While explicitly focusing on compelling humanitarian concerns, President Ford's rhetoric still creates a clear demarcation between democracy as good, responsible and honest and Communist regimes as evil and inhumane. Ford's rhetorical choices exploit pre-existing beliefs and values characterizing the Cold War era to subtly garner support for his position. Specifically, he is implicitly indicating that the humanitarian violations taking place are brutal because Communist forces are responsible for them. The reminder helps to justify his request of additional resources and to reinforce the superiority of democratic ideals.

Throughout President Ford's statements, American value terms are consistently associated with peace and progress while Communism is tied to more negative and violent terms. This juxtaposition of positive and negative serves to highlight Ford's emphasis on the superiority of democracy and is designed to ignite patriotic support for his efforts. On January 28<sup>th</sup>, specifically, his rhetoric associates American efforts with progress while Communists intensified hostilities. President Ford states:

Our immediate goal in Cambodia is to facilitate an early negotiated settlement. The Cambodian Government has repeatedly called for talks... We have fully

supported these proposals...Regrettably, there has been no progress. In fact, the Communists have intensified hostilities by attacking on the outskirts of Phnom Penh and attempting to cut the land and water routes to the capital.

At the same time, to describe the socio-political landscape with Communist influences, Ford uses the terms “suffering and destruction,” which prevents “the necessary security to rebuild their society” and the ultimate goal of “peace and stability in the area,” or a democratic form of government (Ford, Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1975).

When appealing to the House of Representatives in his February 25<sup>th</sup> statement, President Ford highlights the Communists’ “repressive measures” and “scorched-earth policies,” while America has the ability to supply the “means for resistance to aggression,” help the Khmer Republic “negotiate a compromise” and lead to “total victory.” He also juxtaposes the fact that the democratic Khmer Republic has been willing to engage in negotiations “to bring peace” to “tormented” Cambodia, while the Communists have repeatedly resisted. At the same time, he also justifies the need for assistance by threatening the survival of “an independent Cambodia.” Here, again, ‘independent’ is a democratic Americanized term, which in this instance means ‘non-communist.’ When he later poses the rhetorical question, “Are we to deliberately abandon a small country in the midst of its life and death struggle?” Ford is rhetorically associating democracy with ‘life’ and communism with ‘death.’

Through this juxtaposition of God and devil terms, President Ford adds a melodramatic aspect to his political request, and further masks his true motivations with morally compelling humanitarian concerns. Capitalizing on previously established biases against Communists as brutal, Ford’s rhetoric choices are intended to emphasize the necessity of providing assistance.

### American Paternalism

The third element of Windt's crisis rhetoric is the shifting of the issue "from the consequences of war to a question of American character" (p. 130). This creates a feeling of moral responsibility for the American public to support the President's decision or request. In situations such as this, the rhetorical concept of "bear any burden, pay any price" is generally utilized. With its roots in the 1961 Kennedy Inaugural Address, this doctrine truly illustrates the American attitude held throughout the Cold War. For President Ford, this argument repeatedly appears throughout his statements on Cambodia in his attempts to reignite waning interest in military action in Southeast Asia. Specifically, through his statements, President Ford rhetorically shifts the focus from questions of military and material sacrifice to ethical, and inherently American, responsibility.

### Inherent Responsibility

Throughout its modern history, the United States has taken the initiative to spread democratic forms of government to non-democratic nations, specifically in the developing world. It has done so on multiple occasions through military force, even where it has not been requested.<sup>3</sup> These efforts to spread democratic ideals were

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<sup>3</sup> Hassan, G. (2006). In Less than Three Years: The cliché of US sponsored "democracy" to justify invasion and mass murder. *Global Research*.

"As the pretexts to justify the illegal war of aggression against Iraq started to collapse one after the other, the Bush Administration, its vassals and the mass media adopted the cliché of "democracy" to justify the invasion and the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children. However, from the outset of the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the U.S. objective was conspicuous; to destroy Iraq, install a puppet government and pillage the nation's resources."

Gould, J. E. (2006). Democracy's special forces face heat. *Christian Science Monitor*.  
 "US aid agencies have been under scrutiny in Venezuela since it was revealed that some members of US-funded groups were at the forefront of the opposition movement and supported the failed coup against Chávez in 2002. But OTI's mode of operations, until recently, has gone

particularly pronounced during the Cold War, since the thirty-year ideological battle was the guiding force behind the majority of foreign policy decisions. This paternalistic approach to U.S. foreign policy characterized American international relations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and is clearly represented in Ford's Presidential statements on the Cambodian genocide.

Throughout his public statements during the unfolding violence, President Ford repeatedly emphasizes Cambodia's 'dependence' on American assistance for survival. In his statements, he also attempts to capitalize on the public feeling of American superiority and subsequent responsibility to maintain democracy abroad in order to gain support for his request. He attempts to establish the United States as rhetorically 'responsible' for the survival of the Khmer people, which can only be accomplished through the continued existence of the Khmer Republic.

To illustrate Cambodia's dependence and America's responsibility to provide aid, a variation of the phrase, "with our assistance...[the Khmer Republic] can hold their own," repeatedly appears throughout his January 28<sup>th</sup> statement. He also includes the appeal, "we cannot turn our backs on these embattled countries," which is not only emotionally provoking but truly emphasizes American responsibility. President Ford continues to subtly shame the American public and Congress through the repeated argument that U.S. aid is Cambodia's only hope for survival. Specifically, in his January 28<sup>th</sup> statement, the American public is reminded that, "to refuse to provide the assistance needed would threaten the survival of the Khmer Republic" and that his

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under the radar...Called "the special forces of development assistance" by Harvard University public policy professor Robert Rotberg, OTI was designed in the 1990s to help former Soviet Union countries make the transition to democracy. It now works in areas such as Iraq, Haiti, Sudan, and the West Bank."

request for increased assistance is only “to meet the minimum requirements” for its continued existence.

In his February 25<sup>th</sup> statement, President Ford repeatedly describes Cambodia’s relationship with the U.S. as “totally dependent” and repeatedly emphasizes that the U.S. “cannot escape this responsibility,” instituting the ‘bear any burden’ responsibility of being an American. At the same time, he associates declining conditions in Cambodia with “progressive cutbacks of American support,” again illustrating the country’s inability to survive without direct American involvement.

In the face of spreading Communist influence in Southeast Asia, President Ford expands this inherent responsibility to the prevention of this proliferation. To illustrate this point, in his statement on January 28<sup>th</sup>, President Ford repeatedly emphasizes his desire for Cambodians to have the ability to “decide freely who governs them” and to “have a choice in determining their future.” The indication is that the freedom and future is democracy, while Communists cause the current suffering, which the United States must stop.

Later in the statement, Ford argues, “the consequences of refusing [Cambodia] this assistance will reach far beyond Cambodia's borders and impact severely on prospects for peace and stability in that region and the world,” emphasizing our singularly influential role in world politics in an attempt to highlight the obligation to provide assistance. At the same time, in his February 25<sup>th</sup> statement, President Ford repeatedly warns that the destruction of the Khmer Republic (democracy) is imminent “unless the Congress acts very soon to provide...assistance.” A variation of this warning appears an additional seven times throughout the relatively short statement.

In President Ford's April 16<sup>th</sup> statement, he establishes a broader framework to support his arguments for further assistance in Cambodia. On the one hand, he reinforces the concept of American responsibility, stating, "it is a great and difficult responsibility," and "I will seek to carry on that very important responsibility of our country." The second aspect of the supporting framework he establishes is the rift between his desires and those of Congress. Through this, he is aiming to excuse away their lack of support for his requests by illustrating a better America if the two opinions were united into one. Interestingly, however, in 1975 several Congressional representatives in fact did speak out condemning the violence and genocide in Cambodia (Clymer, 2003, p. 246).

#### Redefinition of Terms

An additional aspect of this third line of argument is the redefinition of terms, or 'Newspeak,' which allows the public to rationalize controversial political decisions through the total distortion and redefinition of terms, or what Windt calls, "war is peace; peace is war" (1973, p. 131). This has historically allowed the justification of what appears to be imperialistic action as simply an exercise of America's moral obligation to protect the greater good of the civilized world. President Ford's version of redefining terms was to in fact redefine anti-Communist efforts as humanitarian concerns. Specifically, in an attempt to detach the unfavorable perception of a request for further military interference in Southeast Asia to defeat Communism, Ford instead redefines it as "a moral question that must be faced squarely" (Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>).

Through an analysis of his statements on Cambodia, it becomes clear that President Ford's rhetoric does not follow the prescribed elements of genocide

marginalization in terms of creating a “non-crisis.” Instead, his rhetorical strategies that largely mirror Theodore Windt’s (1973) International Crisis Genre indicate that his concern lies more with the prevention of Communist expansion than in the avoidance of human rights violations. While his rhetoric outwardly favors military intervention against the genocidal groups, the timing and the implicit rhetorical choices reveals that he only favors action against Communism. Upon the Communists’ successful defeat of the democratic Khmer Republic, sympathetic rhetoric for the embattled region all but ceased and did not resume to any noticeable extent until over a year into Jimmy Carter’s presidency.

## JIMMY CARTER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Despite a decrease in popularity following a series of crises in the latter part of his Presidency, Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights has been hailed as among his greatest accomplishments. As articulated by Kenton Clymer (2003) in his article "Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and Cambodia," because of President Carter's emphasis on the importance of humanitarian concern, "human rights had permanently entered the diplomatic parlance of American foreign policy" (p. 245). Throughout his Presidency, Carter's rhetoric reinforces the necessity for Americans to take a leading role in the fight against human rights violations around the world. As he states on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1978, "human rights is the soul of our foreign policy...because human rights is the soul of our nationhood."

However, though he has been regaled as a great champion of human rights for his firm economic actions against the brutal Argentinean junta and the prevention of unilateral elections in the Dominican Republic, his complete inaction in Cambodia cannot be overlooked. Despite having qualified the Khmer Rouge regime as "the worst violator of human rights in the world" (April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1978), no concrete action was ever taken against them while he was in office. In fact, it is thought that his administration materially aided the Khmer Rouge after the Vietnamese ousted the regime in 1979 (Clymer, 2003).

Kenton Clymer (2003) theorizes the reasons behind this inaction, particularly emphasizing the recent, and highly embarrassing, U.S. failure in Vietnam. Negative public opinion still surrounded the idea of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, particularly when it came to Communist governments. Specifically, the U.S.

government's desire to prevent the spread of Soviet influence at the expense of China, which the U.S. had recently allied with, overpowered any emphasis on human rights in the area.

At the same time, there were also domestic issues of more immediate importance to the American government during the mid-1970s. During the time of the genocide in Cambodia, the Carter Administration was working on “forging a new Panama Canal treaty, trying to bring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian problem, responding to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and dealing with the Iranian hostage crisis” (p. 246) to name a few. There was a great deal of capital flowing into these other projects. The Administration, then, was highly preoccupied with other pressing international issues, particularly the war in Afghanistan. However, despite being occupied with these concerns, President Carter still found time to attend to other humanitarian violations while continuing to overlook the increasingly dire situation in Cambodia.

What has been considered the greatest hypocrisy of the Carter Administration's dealings with the Cambodian genocide came in 1978 when Vietnamese armies finally toppled Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge regime. Despite its repeated request for material intervention under President Ford, Carter now condemned the Vietnamese invasion, saying it could not in principle “condone or support the use of military forces outside of one's own territory” (p. 236). The Vietnamese invasion was only evaluated on the understanding that it was expanding Soviet influence further into Southeast Asia, and must be stopped. Interestingly, however, while there was agreement that Pol Pot's regime was contemptible, the regime was allied with China, which the United States

had in fact recently come to support.

While outwardly condemning the mass murders and extensive human rights violations taking place against the Khmer people, there was in fact little thought given to their fate and ultimate well-being. In fact, according to an examination of recently released government documents, records have shown that foreign policy towards Cambodia was measured and decided chiefly from a geopolitical standpoint (Clymer, 2003). Specifically, the Carter administration quickly prioritized geopolitical advantage over humanitarian concern. It was made their policy to blindly remove Vietnamese troops from Cambodia without consideration of what would happen to the people once the government was collapsed, simply because the Vietnamese were Communist enemies. However, the Vietnamese occupation had in fact been the main obstacle preventing Pol Pot from resuming his murderous regime.

In the United States, the public outcry for assistance grew louder until the administration was forced to respond. The eventual response, although financially significant, came too late. It lagged behind the growing demand for action that had begun even prior to the Vietnamese offensive. The administration could not fully ignore the outcry and did supply limited assistance with strict guidelines, but remained focused much more on the geopolitical significance of action in Cambodia. It was undeniable that the United States was “engaged in a worldwide struggle with the Soviet Union, which had raised international tensions to the boiling point by invading Afghanistan” (pg. 277) in 1978, and therefore dictated its foreign policy decisions despite their occasional disconnect with Carter’s human rights platform.

Overall, while it was necessary for the U.S. to funnel some assistance into

Phnom Penh because of the extent of the humanitarian disaster, its unwillingness to address the genocide in a forceful manner was still quite apparent. President Carter's public statements delivered throughout this time period were designed to defuse and divert the public demand for action, and were coupled with small and relatively insignificant relief efforts abroad, which served to downplay the seriousness of the crisis.

### **Summary of Statements**

Between April 1978 and December 1979, President Carter issued four key statements on the unfolding genocide in Cambodia. Each came about in response to growing public demand for action to alleviate the human rights violations continuing to take place against the Khmer people. The first was delivered on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1978 and served to rhetorically 'condemn' the behavior of the Khmer Rouge regime and 'applaud' action taken against them by other countries and organizations. Despite being generally quite weak, the statement has historically been praised for its criticism of human rights violation despite its purely rhetorical nature.

President Carter made the second public statement on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1979 again in response to increasing criticism and pressure for action from the American public. The third, delivered on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1979, emphasizes the complex nature of the conflict and therefore the difficulty of implementing any successful action. The fourth and final statement was issued on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1979 and calls on the governments materially responsible for the genocide to take action against it, but does not promise that America will do the same. In essence, this serves to divert the attention from U.S. inaction in the region.

## GENOCIDE MARGINALIZATION EXAMINED

As established through Theodore Windt's (1973) International Crisis Genre, while in office the American President has certain rhetorical choices that are appropriate for specific situations. While there are certain fundamental lines of argument that the President must use in situations where military intervention is unfavorable, it can also be argued that there are certain lines of argument that must appear when attempting to dissuade public demand. In other words, specific rhetorical strategies function to downplay public demands for military action during times of morally compelling crises. This assertion is emphasized by President Jimmy Carter's rhetorical dissuasion of public demand for military intervention in the Cambodian genocide (1975-79).

The guiding lines of argument within President Carter's discourse can be characterized as; (1) the use of the "it's typical" argument to implicitly dismiss the conflict as characteristic of warring ethnic groups; (2) the rhetorical redirection of blame and responsibility onto Communist governments, while emphasizing American superiority appeals to the public's national ego; and (3) President Carter leverages the ethos of the Presidency to give rhetorical permission to evade humanitarian obligations.

### **"It's Typical"**

The "it's typical" line of argument repeatedly appears in presidential rhetoric on genocide, rhetorically excusing American involvement through the implication that violent conflict such as this "happens all the time" and therefore nothing can be done to stop it. The existence of the country's historical tradition of violence preempts U.S. failure to engage in preventive involvement by indicating that ultimately, it would be futile to try to solve age-old feuds.

### A Fate Deserved

On occasions when U.S.-implemented democratic governments do not hold, for whatever reason, future troubles are implicitly blamed on the country's inability or unwillingness to embrace American ideals. It essentially becomes a 'they got what they deserved' justification. Through an emphasis on this failure to integrate American values, the President is able to diffuse public demand for military intervention if conflict later develops in the country. Similarly, if U.S.-sponsored peace negotiations fail, no matter how realistic or legitimate they originally are, the country once again becomes 'deserving' of future violence.

On January 27, 1973, the Paris Peace Accords were signed by representatives from the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam, the Republic of (South) Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) representing the indigenous revolutionaries from South Vietnam, and the United States. As illustrated by David Chandler's (2007) book *A History of Cambodia*, the agreements were intended to bring peace to Vietnam and to end the conflict through the elimination of U.S. military involvement in the region and a temporary ceasefire between the north and the south. The International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) was also created through the accords to enforce these conditions. It was given the responsibility of supervising the ceasefire and the withdrawal of U.S. troops, as well as reporting on successful implementation or violation of the agreement and protocols.

At the same time, the Paris Agreements were signed in 1973 with the purpose of providing a framework for long-term peace in Southeast Asia, including the country of Cambodia. However, in the years following the Accords, violence and stability

continued throughout the region. Because of the particularly brutal violence in Cambodia, President Carter was able to implicitly blame the conflict on the country's failure to preserve a democratic government, while still outwardly recognizing the genocide as a tragic consequence.

The implicit blaming of the conflict on this 'rejection' of American values is established through the juxtaposition of American values being violated by the Khmer Rouge regime. This essentially establishes the negative consequences of adopting a non-democratic form of government. Specifically, in his April 21<sup>st</sup> statement, Carter emphasizes the current regime's breach of American ideals by citing, "inhumane treatment of the supporters of the previous government," "total suppression of recognized political and religious freedoms" and "deprivation of food and health care." In his December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1978 general statement on the human rights declaration, Carter emphasizes American assistance will first go to "nations which commit themselves to a democratic path to development," and since Cambodia did not, it should not be allocated the coveted support. He also attributes American superiority because of its "common belief in peace, in a free society, and a common devotion the liberties enshrined in our Constitution," while rhetorically blaming the current conflict on Cambodia's ultimate rejection of these ideals.

#### Tradition of Violence

Throughout President Carter's statements on the genocide in Cambodia, he implicitly categorizes the humanitarian tragedy as the consequences of deep-seated ethnic divisions. While never explicitly placing blame on the country's violent history, accountability is implied through specific word choices and overall form in the

statements. Explicitly, President Carter's public statements repeatedly allude to Cambodia's conflict-filled past through numerous references to inter-racial and religious conflict. At the same time, the repeated mention of instability resonates with previously existing prejudices held by the American people. In this way, the rhetorical choices appearing within Carter's statements exploit American misconceptions of ethnic conflict as 'typical' of non-Western regions. When viewed as an ongoing struggle rather than a single genocide, the American public is able to understand and excuse American inability to take on and resolve all such struggles. Thus, it is made easier for the American public to qualify the conflict as 'just another' civil conflict. Without the urgency or threat of genocide as compared to other conflict, the American public was able to justify the government's reluctance to interfere.

President Carter's statements repeatedly highlight the 'complex' and involved nature of the conflict as a means of indicating the long-standing systemic issues driving the current violence. These qualifications appear more frequently as the public demand grows stronger. Specifically, in his October 24<sup>th</sup> statement, he mentions, "the dimensions of Kampuchean tragedy are immense" and in his November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1979 statement, President Carter warns, "It is a difficult issue to resolve," and that "there are major obstacles to overcome" before any action is successful. At the same time, the repeated use of descriptive 'time' terms establishes the systemic nature of the violence in Cambodia. Again in his November 13<sup>th</sup> statement, President Carter even directly states that constant war, "over which we have no control in that long-troubled part of the world," is an important obstacle to American success. In the December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1979 statement, the Khmer people are called "long-suffering" once again highlighting the

systemic nature of the conflict and allaying any public demand for concrete involvement in solving the humanitarian crisis.

### **Preserving National Pride**

Historically, the United States has positioned itself as responsible for the establishment and maintenance of democratic forms of government throughout the developing world. With this attitude comes an inherent belief of American superiority within the general public. Due to this pre-existing national egotism, Presidents tend to make specific rhetorical choices to capitalize on this belief. At the same time, however, they must ensure that their rhetoric does not violate this assumption. In his attempt to dissuade public demand for concrete action in Cambodia, President Carter makes specific rhetorical decisions so as to emphasize American superiority for the public, while explicitly excusing any potential or existing failure within the region. Through this tactic, he is able to maintain a primarily rhetorical approach to combating the continued violence in Cambodia while still upholding the public perception of American supremacy.

At the same time, the Carter administration responded in a typical manner in order to silence its critics by framing what was in fact a minimal relief effort as enormous and critical in ending the conflict. In doing so, Carter engaged in nominal, and primarily monetary, relief efforts in Cambodia. However, in a number of the public statements delivered during the genocide, President Carter's rhetoric framed these efforts as enormous and fundamental contributions to the alleviation and eventual discontinuation of the violence. By focusing on plans for relief, despite being minimal contributions, and emphasizing quick action, even though it came far too late to make

any tangible difference, the Carter administration was able to temporarily satisfy public demands and alleviate pressure to take concrete military action.

President Carter appeals directly to the public ego both by offering a means of participation in humanitarian relief efforts, even if just rhetorically, and through the repetition of terms highlighting positive ‘American’ characteristics. In President Carter’s October 24<sup>th</sup> statement, he expresses certainty that the American public “will want to be part of this urgent humanitarian effort.” He also “call[s] upon Americans to support” volunteer agencies through religious prayer and monetary donations. In his November 13<sup>th</sup> statement, he repositions the tragedy as an opportunity for the people of “a great nation” and “its government” to “react in an unselfish, dynamic, and effective way,” and recognizes the public desire to “want to help,” but discourages them from “grasping for recognition” in personal relief efforts. President Carter also interestingly capitalizes on this desire to help by explicitly stating, “Public calling for action might be the very thing that would prevent that action from being carried out.” In this way, President Carter is able to redirect focus away from U.S. inaction by preempting any failure and placing blame amongst the American public. This tactic protects the U.S. indefinitely from being held responsible for lack of intervention in the genocide.

#### Redirection of Blame

When attempting to redirect and deflect blame for inaction or failure in Cambodia, President Carter repeatedly highlights shortcomings of Communist regimes. Specifically, Carter blames insufficient assistance reaching Phnom Penh on the Soviet Union and the Vietnamese government, despite information revealing their positive participation. In this way, Carter is able to capitalize on not only the prevailing

perception of American superiority but also the generally established belief that Communist regimes are brutal. Although subtle, President Carter also shifts the responsibility of resolving the conflict while still maintaining American superiority. Specifically, in his November 13<sup>th</sup> statement, he includes a paragraph stating, “Often a United States initiative is counterproductive to eventual carrying out of recommendations. If the initiatives come from...other nations than we, it’s much more effective.”

However, more significantly, his December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1979 statement redirects the blame for failure to alleviate the crisis through negative and highly descriptive terms to illuminate Communist fault. The juxtaposition of positive terms with negative terms associated with communist efforts helps establish the innocence of the U.S. and guilt of communist regimes. He immediately excuses any fault of non-communist efforts, stating, “Starvation still threatens...despite a massive international relief effort” and recalling, “the international community has offered the means and has the will to allay the suffering.” Here the terms ‘starvation’ and ‘suffering’ are rhetorically compared to ‘relief effort,’ ‘allay,’ and ‘will.’ Throughout the statement, negative descriptive terms to indicate the communists’ prevention of aid reaching Phnom Penh are repeated throughout. For example, the terms ‘deliberately blocked,’ ‘obstructed,’ ‘diverted,’ ‘stockpiled,’ ‘interference,’ ‘surcharge on human survival,’ and ‘feed the flames of war,’ are used to describe the communist approach the relief efforts.

### **Rhetorical Excusing**

The President holds a unique position of power over the American people, as the Presidency presupposes possession of strong moral values. As such, Americans look to

the President for guidance on ethical as well as political issues, and generally trust the legitimacy of his decisions. Specifically, in the case of a crisis, Americans turn to the President for moral direction (Windt, 1973). However, the recognition of a situation as a humanitarian crisis provokes strong moral reactions and demands for a resolution. In certain situations, the American government has taken it upon itself to solve the other countries' problems through deep ground-level entanglement. If the government does not wish to militarily engage in the prevention of the crisis, however, the President can use the ethos of the office to convince the public it is morally correct at times 'not' to be concerned with typical humanitarian obligations. This is generally done subtly through the redefinition of morally significant terms and deemphasizing the crisis urgency.

#### A 'Situation'

Redefinition of terms is an important rhetorical strategy for facilitating acceptance of an otherwise emotionally compelling event. According to Theodore Windt (1973), if political language is vague enough through redefinition, it becomes easier for the audience to rationalize the implications of controversial policy decisions. Specifically, President Carter redefines 'genocide' in Cambodia as simply a 'situation,' removing the inherently compelling nature of the term. Redefinition is achieved through constant repetition of the new term in place of the old to the point that it loses all political significance. Through the use of redefinition techniques, the President is able to further convince the public of his policy decisions. This is done under the assumption that, if the President does not qualify the violence as 'genocide,' the potentiality of public demand for military action is greatly reduced.

Throughout the conflict, the rhetorical statements clearly establish the genocide as nothing more than a “situation” in Cambodia, which is qualified as “tragic” (Apr. 21<sup>st</sup>). There are also derivations of the word genocide used to describe the conflict, but never an explicit definition. Associated with the communist Khmer groups are, “genocidal policies” (Apr. 21<sup>st</sup>), “acts of genocide” (Apr. 21<sup>st</sup>), and a “tragedy of genocidal proportion” (Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>). He also refers the conflict as ‘human rights violations’ multiple times throughout the conflict without specifying the violations or abuses as genocide. This repetition firmly establishes the perception of the Cambodian genocide in a much less urgent light, which clearly dilutes the rhetorical and emotional power of the term.

#### Actions Speak Louder Than Words

While implicitly avoiding concrete military action, the United States is obligated to explicitly demonstrate its continued commitment to peace and democratization. With growing public demand for a response, it was impossible for the Carter administration to fully disregard the violence in Cambodia. Despite the government’s hesitance to engage in military intervention, the public criticism would grow worse if this hesitance were verbalized. As a means of alleviating this pressure, President Carter issued a statement heavily laden with hollow and highly emotional promises. The emotional appeals in Carter’s April 21<sup>st</sup> statement were used to convince the public, and the world, of the continued American dedication to international peace and security, and particularly to maintain President Carter’s reputation as the champion of human rights without requiring decisive military action.

In President Carter's statement on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1978, he frequently uses highly emotional terms to describe the international feeling towards the Khmer Rouge regime. Specifically, Carter describes the feeling of 'horror' at the human rights violations, but never personalizes it to the American government. In describing the regime, he does not hesitate to use condemning terms, calling them "the worst violator of human rights in the world today," but never indicates his personal feelings on the matter.

Beyond this negative description of the regime, President Carter uses abstract action to give the illusion of definitive action. Specifically, in his April 21<sup>st</sup> public address, Carter acknowledges that America has "the responsibility to speak out in condemnation of the Cambodian Government," but does not concede to the need for any further military action. Later on in the statement, he reminds the public that the U.S. government "support[s] the growing international protest against the policies of this inhumane regime," "welcome[s] and applaud[s]" the initiatives taken by other countries and organizations, but never explicitly promises any action to counteract the gross violations. In fact, over the course of the statement, he uses the terms 'speak out,' 'appeal,' 'resolution,' 'condemn' and 'protest' a total of six times. Even in his December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1978 statement reassuring the public of his broad commitment to the continued alleviation of human rights largely overlooking Cambodia, he promises only that "we will speak out" and "we will not hesitate to convey our outrage" in the face of humanitarian violations. It is the inherently abstract nature of these terms that indicates the U.S. government's 'commitment' is in fact only rhetoric without intent of definitive military action.

### **Once Again**

Over the last thirty years, the area has gradually become more stable, but its violent past still colors the attitudes and experiences of those living in Cambodia today. The Khmer Rouge's intermittent violence carried out against the Cambodian people continued until the 1990s and largely contributed to the country's slow progression to peace and stability. While the country cannot escape its history, it could only be hoped that the Cambodians, and the world, would have learned from the events and such horrific violence would be prevented in the future.

Unfortunately, since the conclusion of the conflict, genocides have continued to take place around the globe, and the United States has responded in much the same fashion. While there have been a number of significant conflicts following the conclusion of the Cambodian genocide, the Bosnian genocide (1992-1995) is the most appropriate for analysis. Beyond the staggering casualties, it bears some similarity to the Rwandan genocide as well as to the Cambodian genocide.

## CHAPTER SIX

### BOSNIAN GENOCIDE (1992-1995)

From 1992-1995, the Bosnia-Herzegovina civil war resulted in between one hundred and two hundred thousand deaths, the vast majority of which were Bosnian Muslims. The conflict primarily involved three ethnic groups: the Croats, the Serbs, and the Bosnian Muslims. The term ‘ethnic cleansing’ was coined during the conflict as a means of explaining the horrific events while still avoiding the label of ‘genocide.’ However, as Courtney Brkic (2007) states in her article “Justice Denied in Bosnia,” “the term is oddly clinical when considering the mass killings, torture, and evictions it describes” (p. 20).

This chapter will (1) explicate the background and conditions leading to the Bosnian genocide (1992-1995); and (2) examine the genocide marginalization genre through an analysis of President George H. W. Bush<sup>4</sup> and President William Clinton’s public statements.

#### Ethno-Political Divisions

The history leading up to the war is important for understanding the horrific nature and complexity of the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict. Racism and injustice had historically plagued the Balkans, specifically following the territorial changes decided at the conclusion of WWI when the Western Allies created Yugoslavia. However, upon its break up in WWII, the former Yugoslavia was inundated with complex and deep-seated wars, which were carried out with “ludicrous nationalistic arrogance” (Brkic, 2007, p. 20). The Bosnia genocide was among these conflicts and has been considered

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<sup>4</sup> President Bush will refer to President George H. W. Bush -- the 41<sup>st</sup> President of the United States -- for the remainder of this project

the most violent.

In Bosnia in the 1980s, the population was a combination of different ethnic and religious territories, specifically “1.3 million Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Catholic Christians), over 1 million Bosniaks (Sunni Muslim), and 0.7 million Bosnian Croats (Roman Catholic Christians)” each with legitimate historical claims to a homeland there (Peace Pledge Union, 2000). These groups had historically been in violent opposition to each other, and the combination would eventually prove lethal.

From 1463 to 1878, the Ottoman Empire was in control of Bosnia and the entire Balkan area. This era had an enduring effect on Bosnia’s population makeup as a result of its military conquests and expansions. Specifically, according to Noel Malcolm (1994) in *Bosnia: A Short History*, a native population of Muslims arose in Bosnia during this time and soon became its largest single ethno-religious community. Following a slow deterioration of Ottoman rule in Bosnia, the country was ceded to the Austro-Hungarian Empire through the treaty of Berlin where it remained until the end of WWI (Peace Pledge Union, 2000).

In the beginning of its rule, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was faced with unrest, including an influx of Slavic rebels, but was rather quickly able to establish stability. The goal was to quell nationalist movements from the south and encourage a single Bosnian nation, which was supported by the Muslim community (Malcolm, 1994). However, despite efforts to stop these movements, the movement headed by Serbia for a united South Slavic state grew quickly in power and numbers. The Austro-Hungarian government ultimately annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, which brought with it political tensions. These tensions culminated in the assassination of Archduke Franz

Ferdinand in Sarajevo by a Serb nationalist, Gavrilo Princip and subsequently triggered the beginning of the First World War (Malcolm, 1994).

Following World War I, the victorious Western Allies created the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by joining Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Slav territories Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia, which the Serbs then essentially controlled from the Serbian capital of Belgrade (Peace Pledge Union, 2000). Despite the fact that Bosnians made up a majority of the Kingdom's population, any suggestion of Bosnian nationhood was quickly denied. In fact, in 1929 Yugoslavia was restructured into "banates," completely eliminating traditional geographic or ethnic lines and therefore removing any semblance of Bosnia as a whole (Malcolm, 1994). The overarching ideological conflict between Serbian Nationalism and Croatian regionalism escalated during this time period, according to Andras Riedlmayer's (1993) piece, "A Brief History of Bosnia-Herzegovina," but was temporarily dissipated by the threat of a Nazi invasion.

In April 1941, Nazi forces invaded Yugoslavia and once again partitioned the country, ceding Bosnia to the Independent State of Croatia. This gave rise to a powerful resistance movement called the Partisans headed by Josip Broz Tito, the leader of the Yugoslav communists. This multi-ethnic group fought against the Chetniks, which were a nationalist and royalist resistance movement, as well as the Nazi presence (Malcolm, 1994). The majority of the military offensives against the Axis forces took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, causing the local population to bear the brunt of the war (Riedlmayer, 1993).

Upon Germany's defeat and the subsequent retreat from Yugoslav territory, Tito was able to reunite the country, including Slovenia, Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro,

Serbia, Macedonia, and the two semi-autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojodina, under the slogan “Brotherhood and Unity,” creating The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (UHRC, 2006). For the next few decades, Bosnia was used as the central location for weapons and military development, which played a significant role in the genocide (Malcolm, 1994).

As President, Tito has been credited with single-handedly holding Yugoslavia together, playing the Soviet Union and the United States against each other throughout the Cold War in order to obtain financial assistance from both. However, after Josip Tito’s death in 1980, the federation was left without any solid leadership and rapidly “plunged into political and economic chaos” (UHRC, 2006). Croatians and Albanians began vying for independence while the Serbian nationalist movement became revitalized. This deterioration of unity paved way for Slobodan Milosevic’s rise to power in the late-1980s.

#### Slobodan Milosevic

Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader and president of Yugoslavia during the 1990s, would eventually become the first acting Head of State to be charged and tried by an international tribunal on grounds of gross humanitarian violations, including genocide. Milosevic, having abandoned communism for nationalism and religious hatred, came to power by 1987 following the power-struggle in Yugoslavia. According to Agneza Roberson (2007) in her piece, “The Role of Rhetoric in the Politicization of Ethnicity,” much of Milosevic’s ability to “establish himself as a populist Serbian leader [was] through his rhetoric” (p. 268). In other words, he was able to eloquently speak his way into a position of authority by exploiting existing ethno-religious

divisions. It can be argued Milosevic's rhetoric was powerful enough to influence and even shape the events that began the ethno-political conflicts in Yugoslavia.

As Ben Liberman (2006) discusses in his article "Nationalist Narratives, Violence Between Neighbours and Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina," the violence and persecution that took place during and following WWII, and hate narratives, were used as justifications of ethnic cleansing escalated the brutality of the country's genocide. In particular, Milosevic's discourse concerned with historical Serbian suffering and Croatian independence rhetoric helped legitimize the violence in the early 1990s and label certain ethnic groups as traitors to the national cause.

Milosevic's goal, according to his critics, was to create "Greater Serbia" and to incite violent Serbian nationalism. He began his campaign by provoking deep-seated ethnic tensions between the Serbs and Albanians, through dehumanization and demonizing of the Albanian community, in the semi-autonomous province of Kosovo (UHRC, 2006). Religiously, the two groups were Orthodox Christian and Sunni Muslim and had been at odds for some time, as the minority Christian Serbs claimed maltreatment by the Albanian Muslim majority. Milosevic, leveraging this ethnic conflict, eventually revoked the semi-autonomous status of Kosovo and Vojvodina after encouraging Serbian-backed political unrest in the provinces (Brkic, 2007).

#### A History of Serb Persecution

In 1990, elections in both Croatia and Slovenia brought the Nationals to political power. A year later, both territories along with Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia and were recognized as such by the international community (Brkic, 2007). When this happened, Slobodan Milosevic, who headed up the Serbian nationalist

movement and was in control of Serbian forces, attempted to quell the separatist movements in Slovenia. However, after having little success, he shifted focus to Croatia where Serbs made up about twelve percent of the population. Fueled by pro-Serbian rhetoric, and only a year prior to the start of the Bosnia-Herzegovina war, “the Yugoslav National Army, together with Serb paramilitaries, mercilessly target[ed] Croatian towns...and expelled Croatians from a third of their territory” (Brkic, 2007, p. 20).

Milosevic was able to rally support by exploiting deep-seated resentment surrounding a history of violence against Serbs living in Croatia. During WWII, Ante Pavelic had been the leader of Croatia’s fascist, pro-Nazi Ustasha Party and had directed widespread and extensive massacres against Jews and Serbs living in Croatia at the time. As Yaeli Bloch-Elkon (2007) discusses in “Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992-1995,” this intolerance was revitalized in 1991 when Croatia’s leader at the time Franjo Tudjman began to once again enact biased laws against Orthodox Serbs. Milosevic was then able to justify his invasion of Vukovar in July 1991 as efforts to ‘protect’ the Serbian minority living within its borders. For eighty-six days, Milosevic’s army and Croatian guerrilla fighters bombarded the city until it was all but demolished. They then began mass executions of Croatian men. At the end of 1991, U.S.-sponsored ceasefire agreement temporarily tapered the fighting.

President George Bush, Sr. avoided getting militarily involved with the conflict and instead recognized Slovenia and Croatia as independent. At the same time, despite an arms embargo imposed by the United Nations on all of former Yugoslavia,

Milosevic and his Serbian army were already well-armed enough to possess a strategic military advantage (Roberson, 2007). Throughout the conflict, the world remained largely indifferent to the violence and despite some economic sanctions, the UN forbid any military intervention.

These wars throughout former Yugoslavia lead up to the genocide in Bosnia in the next few years. The history of instability and violence was the catalyst for the mass murder of the Bosnian Muslim community. It was Milosevic's unchecked power and success in his pro-Serbian action in Croatia and Kosovo that buoyed him into the position to murder nearly 200,000 Bosnian citizens.

#### Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia

In March 1992, the President of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic, called for the country's independence from Yugoslavia. By April, its independence was recognized by the both the U.S. and the European Union (Brkic, 2007). In Bosnia, the minority Serbs made up thirty-two percent of the population in a majority Muslim country. In response, Milosevic attacked the capital city of Sarajevo and quickly transformed it to a place of terror and violence. Cathie Carmichael (2006), in her article "Violence and Ethnic Boundary Maintenance in Bosnia in the 1990s," discusses Milosevic's use of snipers who, at the conclusion of the war, had shot down over 3,500 children.

According to work by Alvin Magid (2007), "The Key to my Neighbor's House: Seeking Justice in Bosnia and Rwanda," Milosevic and his Serbian army's violence was primarily aimed at the Bosnian Muslim population and completely overwhelmed them with their superior arms. The Serbs rounded up Muslims during their advance and began to engage in mass shootings. They also established makeshift concentration

camps for boys and men while raping their women and children, and repeatedly forced the repopulation of towns.

Over the next few years, the media began to use the term “ethnic cleansing” to describe the violence and genocide occurring in Bosnia. Radovan Karadzic was the president of the illegitimate Bosnian Serb Republic throughout 1993 and continuously denied any involvement in the violence (Carmichael, 2006). Because of the West’s demonstrated unresponsiveness, Milosevic confidently continued the genocide without fear of retaliation.

### The International Community

It was not until February 1993 that the international community began to pay attention to the killings. This only followed a tragic event when a mortar shell struck a marketplace in Sarajevo, killing sixty-eight innocent bystanders and wounding around two hundred (Bloch-Elkon, 2007). The international media picked up on the violence and broadcast the disturbing images globally, bringing with it a demand for military intervention against Milosevic and the Serbs.

By this time, the Clinton Administration had come to power, having promised as part of their platform to bring an end to the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. Early in his presidency, Clinton issued an ultimatum through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) demanding the withdrawal of Serbian artillery from Sarajevo. The Serbian forces complied and a ceasefire was soon reached (Brkic, 2007). In May 1993, the U.N. declared a total of six Bosnian towns to be “Safe Havens” and put them under peacekeeper supervision. However, regardless of these efforts, there was still violence against Muslims throughout Bosnia, which eventually escalated to attacks against U.N.

peacekeepers. The Serbian army took “hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers as hostages and turn[ed] them into human shields, chain[ing] [the peacekeepers] to military targets such as ammo supply dumps” (UHRC, 2006). The NATO response was to engage in air strikes, which brought about the climax of the four-year genocidal conflict.

At this time, the Serbian army commanded by General Ratko Mladic specifically targeted a town called Srebrenica, one of the U.N. Safe Havens. Beginning on July 11, 1995 the Serbs began systematically selecting and slaughtering around 8,000 men ages fifteen to sixty-five, and raping Muslim women and girls. The U.N. peacekeepers were forced to stand by and watch as these heinous crimes took place, crippled by the rules of the U.N. Courtney Brkic (2007) writes:

The executions at Srebrenica took days. Bosnian Muslim men and boys were shot beside pits and buried in mass graves. They were caught as they tried to flee through mine-infested fields and mountains. They were taken to warehouses and factories where they were executed or gunned down in the wilderness over a period of weeks. In all, up to eight thousand were killed (p. 19).

This mass murder was the largest massacre in Europe since WWI.

In response to the genocide in Srebrenica, a massive NATO bombing campaign was launched from August to October 1995 against Serbs in Bosnia. At the same time, Muslim-Croat troops began to gain position against them on the ground. On November 1, 1995, Milosevic finally traveled to the U.S. to engage in peace talks (Roberson, 2007).

As C. Doherty (1993) discusses in the article “Foreign Policy: Diplomatic Strategy on Bosnia Leaves Many Still Skeptical,” a peace accord was reached following three weeks of intense negotiations. The Dayton Peace Accord was signed in Paris on December 14, 1995 and created the Bosnian Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat

Federation out of former Bosnia. It also called for democratic elections and the prosecution of war criminals. In 1993, Bosnia-Herzegovina brought a suit before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Serbia and Montenegro for alleged genocide. While the ICJ concluded that Serbia was not responsible for the genocide committed by Bosnian Serbs in Srebrenica, it did determine that it had failed to punish those responsible. The ICJ also determined that the Bosnian government had not sufficiently proved that there had been genocide against Bosniaks on a more general scale (Malcolm, 1994). According to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, the Bosnia genocide was "the greatest failure of the West since the 1930s."

## GENOCIDE MARGINALIZATION EXAMINED

In an attempt to examine the validity of the genocide marginalization as generic criticism, an extensive textual analysis was conducted on the substantive and stylistic characteristics of eight pieces of political rhetoric. Using the Web site *The American Presidency Project*, a search was conducted for public statements delivered by President Bush and President Clinton over the period of 1992-1995 that mentioned or directly addressed the situation in Bosnia. This was done with the purpose of contrasting the political rhetoric with the timeline of genocide. There were eight statements in total delivered between 1992 and 1995 that were analyzed for the purpose of this chapter.<sup>5</sup>

The American President has set rhetorical choices that are appropriate for certain situations (Windt, 1973). Specifically, there are certain fundamental lines of argument that the President frequently uses in situations where military intervention is unfavorable. These rhetorical strategies function to allay public demands for military action during times of morally compelling crises. This assertion is based on President Bush and President Clinton's rhetorical dissuasion of public demand for engagement in the Bosnian genocide.

The guiding lines of argument within both President Bush and President Clinton's discourse can be characterized as; (1) the implicit dismissal of the conflict as "typical" for the region; (2) the focus on 'any measure necessary' and the opening of

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<sup>5</sup> Timeline of significant statements:

1. **August 6, 1992:** George Bush, Sr.
2. **August 13, 1992:** George Bush, Sr.
3. **October 2, 1992:** George Bush, Sr.
4. **April 23, 1993:** William J. Clinton
5. **May 2, 1993:** William J. Clinton
6. **May 21, 1993:** William J. Clinton
7. **May 22, 1993:** William J. Clinton
8. **September 26, 1993:** William J. Clinton

detention camps, which offers the promise of intervention without the need for actually taking action; and (3) President Bush and President Clinton leverage the ethos of the Presidency to give the public rhetorical permission to evade moral humanitarian obligations.

### **“It’s Typical”**

In instances where democracy has been forced upon a country under the pretenses of ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ by the United States, but has not been able to take hold, the U.S. President often implicitly blames future conflict within the country on this ‘failure’ to adopt American values and ideals. In this way, it develops into a ‘they got what they deserved’ justification for avoiding concrete intervention. There is a similar prevailing attitude if U.S.-sponsored peace negotiations fail, regardless of the realistic nature of the demands. It is again positioned as almost an inevitable consequence of this refusal of American values if the country faces conflict in the future. Through this, it is made easier for the public to rationalize American inaction in the face of such violence.

### **A Fate Deserved**

Throughout the genocide, both President Bush and President Clinton repeatedly compared the attempted progress being made by the U.S. to other democratic nations, and blamed those responsible for the violence for delayed help. The implication is that, despite the effort being put in by the U.S., inaction stems from the unwillingness of the warring parties to follow democratic guidance. It is therefore, not the fault of the American government but instead of the country’s backwardness. This comparison

serves to excuse the continuation of the violence as the fault of the ethnic groups in the Balkans for resisting American ideals and efforts to help.

In President Bush's August 6<sup>th</sup> statement, he mentions that the U.S. has "been working" to bring an end to the conflict but it will require "the active cooperation and participation of the parties," which he implies cannot be relied upon. In his statement made on August 13<sup>th</sup>, he repeatedly emphasizes that the U.S. "expects full cooperation" from the different sides in the conflict, warning that this is vital for American efforts to be effective. In his statement made on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, President Bush emphasizes that, despite U.S. sponsored agreements in London, it is the fault of the groups in Bosnia that the violence continues.

President Clinton later continues this comparison, stating, "we have tried to move forward," and the U.S. has "made some progress" (Apr. 23<sup>rd</sup>), but the violence still persists. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1993, Clinton again emphasizes that, despite U.S.-backed efforts, it is on the ground where these efforts fail and therefore is not the fault of the U.S. He states, "We have yet to determine whether the Serbs are serious about peace," and that agreements have "not changed behavior" and peace on paper has not translated into "practices of peace on the ground." Once there is finally progress made on peace negotiations, he emphasizes that it is the hope of the U.S. that "the progress...finally reflects the will of the parties" (Sep. 26<sup>th</sup>).

#### Tradition of Violence

Through President Bush and President Clinton's public statements on the genocide in Bosnia, the conflict was subtly positioned as a 'tragic,' but predictable, consequence of ethnic inferiority. While never explicitly stated, this opinion is implied

through word choice and overall stylistic form. Specifically, President Bush repeatedly alludes to the Balkans' violent and unstable history. The administration never explicitly attributes the conflict to backwardness or inferiority, but the emphasis on former Yugoslavia's past instability resonates with pre-established American bias. In this way, the rhetorical choices exploited the American misconception of ethnic conflict as 'typical' in the developing world. At the same time, the rhetorical framing of the struggle as 'on-going' allows the American public to excuse U.S. inability to resolve it, emphasizing the irrationality of trying to solve all deep-seated struggles. As a result, it was made easier for the American public to qualify the conflict as 'one more' Balkan civil war.

The terms used to describe the Balkan's sociopolitical landscape, when viewed as a whole, create the framework for ethnic conflict as the root cause. The words chosen to describe the violence carry strong negative connotations and are repeated throughout the statements. Specifically, in President Bush's August 13<sup>th</sup> statement, he calls the violence, "acts of barbarism" and on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, he calls it "savage violence." The terms barbaric and savage imply that the violence comes from inferiority and backwardness.

While this choice is important as a substantive element, it is the stylistic strategy that gives the phrases rhetorical significance. Specifically, lengths of time terms are used in conjunction with descriptive words to emphasize the systemic nature of the violence. In his August 6<sup>th</sup> statement, President Bush repeatedly emphasizes that the violence "grows out of age-old animosities," "century-old feuds," "blood feuds," and warns, "the lines between enemies and even friends are jumbled and fragmented." He

also emphasizes here that attempting to establish peace in such a troubled place would “literally take years of work” (Aug. 6<sup>th</sup>).

When he expresses the hope that the U.S. “will be able to bring peace to that troubled region,” the use of the term ‘troubled’ again indicates a long-term instability. He later reinforces this sentiment in his October 2<sup>nd</sup> statement, saying, “history shows...this troubled region.” President Clinton echoes this, stating, “all of the other troubles in that region” (Apr. 23<sup>rd</sup>). Despite the fact that the Allied forces created former Yugoslavia, the violence is still attributed to the local ethnic groups.

### Containment

In an article written by Karrin Vasby Anderson (1999) entitled “Rhymes with Rich: “Bitch” as a Tool of Containment in Contemporary American Politics,” the concept of rhetoric of containment in politics is illustrated. Historically, this style of rhetoric was used in conjunction with Communism, drawing an analogy between the spread of communism and the destructive, fatal nature of cancer on the human body, or democracy. President Bush, throughout his Presidency, utilizes containment rhetoric, particularly in conjunction with conflict in the Balkans.

President Bush used containment rhetoric, which was typically used in conjunction with the spread of communism, through the repeated usage of the terms, “defusing,” “containing,” “preventing the spread,” “isolate,” “preventive diplomacy to preclude a widening,” “prevent its spilling over” in his August 6<sup>th</sup> statement. In the August 13<sup>th</sup> statement, he again uses the terms “inhibit spillover,” and in his October 2<sup>nd</sup> statement, the terms are once again repeated, “contain the conflict” and “containing and reducing,” as well as the efforts to “prevent the violence from spreading.”

President Clinton later continues this metaphor, by stating on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1993, “the conflict must be contained” so it “doesn’t spread” and on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, “confining” and “limiting” the conflict must be a priority. Through this repetition of a cancer metaphor, President Clinton is likening the violence to a disease that must be removed. However, generally this metaphor was used when discussing military action against Communist countries, so it is interesting that it appears in discussion of Bosnia.

### **Bear Any Burden**

Throughout his public statements on the Bosnian conflict, President Bush emphasizes the importance of employing ‘all necessary means’ to ensure that humanitarian relief reaches the Bosnian people. However, this term is incredibly vague and it is unclear what it would entail.

The primary goal, as repeatedly stressed through Bush’s public statements, is to gain full disclosure of the detainment camps. With this as the primary goal, President Bush is able to offer a temporary and insufficient solution to the violence. When asked by a reporter on August 6<sup>th</sup> if America had a “moral obligation” to do whatever is necessary to stop the violence in Bosnia, President Bush responds, “I feel a moral obligation to see that these camps are inspected.” Through this and other statements, he establishes a clear goal of opening detainment camps to inspection, which establishes a manageable and solvable approach the conflict. He also guarantees that the U.S. “will not rest until...[it] has gained access to any and all detention camps” (Aug. 6<sup>th</sup>) and that “it is absolutely essential” that they are opened. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, he reassures the American public, “We have moved urgently to gain access to all camps, prisons, and

detention camps” and on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, he states, “Our demand that the Red Cross be given access to detention camps has begun to yield results.”

President Bush, in his August 13<sup>th</sup> and August 6<sup>th</sup> statements, argues that the U.S. is vying for the authorization of “all measures necessary” to allow for humanitarian aid to reach the Bosnian people. He both repeatedly uses the phrase “all necessary means,” as well as variations, including “no matter what it takes” (Aug. 6<sup>th</sup>), “do whatever [the U.S.] has to do,” and “all measures necessary (Aug. 13<sup>th</sup>, Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>). There is also a highly hypocritical aspect to this request, because while he requests the authorization of all necessary means, President Bush and President Clinton both say they are both willing and refuse to use force in Bosnia. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, Bush states that the authorization will include U.S. and NATO “to use force if necessary,” but then says he is not mobilizing troops. This continues throughout the conflict, and despite the authorization, it takes until essentially the conclusion of the genocide for any real action to be taken.

While the war was internationalized in 1995 with Operation Deliberate Force headed by NATO, action was only in the very late stages of the three-year war, and really came too late. The vast majority of murder and torture had taken place before, so the bombing campaign against the Bosnia Serbs was inadequate when compared to the conflict as a whole. The purpose of the sustained air strikes against the Serb Army was to undermine the army’s capabilities, which eventually was accomplished. Ultimately, negotiations led to the Dayton Peace Accords in December 1995. However, it was only after increasing public pressure that the U.S., as part of NATO, did engage in any military efforts, despite the early promise of “any means necessary.”

### **Excusable Morality**

The President holds a unique position of power over the American people, as the Presidency presupposes possession of strong moral values. As such, Americans look to the President for guidance on ethical as well as political issues, and generally trust the legitimacy of his decisions. Specifically, in the case of a crisis, Americans turn to the President for moral direction. However, the recognition of a situation as a humanitarian crisis provokes strong moral reactions and demands a resolution. In certain situations, the American government has taken it upon itself to solve the other countries' problems through deep ground-level entanglement. If the government does not wish to militarily engage in the prevention of the crisis, however, the President can use the ethos of his office to convince the public that it is morally correct at times 'not' to be involved with humanitarian crises. This is generally done implicitly through the redefinition of morally compelling terms and the deemphasizing of the crisis as urgent.

### **"Ethnic Cleansing"**

Redefinition of terms is an important rhetorical strategy for facilitating moral acceptance of immoral action. According to Windt (1973), if political language is vague enough through redefinition, it becomes easier for the audience to rationalize the implications of controversial policy decisions. Redefinition is achieved through constant repetition of the new term in place of the old to the point that it loses all political significance. Through the use of redefinition techniques, the President is able to further convince the public of his policy decisions. This is done under the assumption that if the President does not qualify the violence as 'genocide,' then the potentiality of public demand for military action is greatly reduced.

With its roots in the Bosnian conflict, the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ became a popular redefinition for genocide. The cleansing process that took place in Bosnia included intimidation, forced expulsion and murder of ‘unwanted’ ethnic groups, the destruction of any material possessions, places of worship, or cultural remnants of the group, mass rape and psychological and physical torture. Despite the International Court of Justice (ICJ) determination of the crimes as ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’, but not genocide, the difference seems to lie only in the name. However, with this redefinition repeated throughout the Presidential rhetoric, and the media at the time, it became a way for the public to understand the conflict without the moral weight of the term ‘genocide.’

Throughout each public statement, the developing genocide is clearly established as a ‘situation’ or ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Bosnia. In President Bush’s August 6<sup>th</sup> statement alone, he refers to the conflict as a “situation,” a “true humanitarian nightmare,” and a “crisis” on multiple occasions. In later statements, he calls it a “conflict,” “acts of barbarism,” “human tragedy” (Aug. 13<sup>th</sup>), and a “cruel war” (Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>). President Clinton repeatedly calls it the “conflict” and eventually, “slaughter” towards the end of the conflict.

Significantly, since its origins are in the Bosnian conflict, the repetition of the term “ethnic cleansing” satisfies both a need for recognition of the violence as well as diffusing the strong moral power of the term ‘genocide.’ The phrase ‘ethnic cleansing,’ or a variation of it, appears repeatedly throughout the Presidential statements. President Clinton refers to violence as “ethnic cleansing” numerous times throughout his

statements. The closest it comes to being qualified as genocide is by it being called a “genocidal process.”

### Actions Speak Louder Than Words

While implicitly criticizing historical ethnic conflict in the Balkans and Bosnia’s ultimate inability to adopt American ideals, the United States is also compelled to explicitly exhibit its continued commitment to peace and democratization. As an issue of international political consequence, it is impossible for the U.S. government to fully ignore the genocide in Bosnia. Despite the government’s resistance to military intervention, the international and national community would react negatively if this unwillingness were to be expressed. To avoid doing so, the President instead makes promises loaded with highly emotional terms. These appeals are used to convince the public, and the world, of continued American dedication to international peace and security without requiring any immediate concrete action.

To describe his feelings on the violence, President Bush in his August 6<sup>th</sup> statement uses the terms, ‘outraged,’ ‘horrified,’ and later in his October 2<sup>nd</sup> statement, ‘deeply troubled.’ President Clinton finds the violence ‘abhorrent’ and ‘wrong’ (Apr. 23<sup>rd</sup>). In addition to conveying disapproval of the conflict, President Bush and later President Clinton repeatedly use purely rhetorical action terms to satisfy demand for actual action.

Despite the continuation of violence and ethnic cleansing in the area, the Presidential statements repeatedly emphasize the ‘hard work’ of the U.S. government and their allies. The term “work” is incredibly vague, and while some of the steps being taken are explained, the ambiguity of the concept still remains. Both President Bush and

President Clinton repeatedly mention this idea. For example, “We’ve been working,” “we must continue to work,” “we’ve been working,” all appear in Bush’s August 6<sup>th</sup> statement, “we will continue to work,” “the United States worked hard” in his August 13<sup>th</sup> statement, and “the United States has been working intensively,” “we have been working,” on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1993, President Clinton states that the U.S. has “been working” and is doing “some important work.”

At the same time, President Bush uses other highly rhetorical action terms to impress upon the public that something is being done, even if not concrete. Specifically, he uses the terms, “consulting,” “diplomatic relations” (Aug. 6<sup>th</sup>), “resolution,” “our hope,” “put war criminals on notice,” “discourage human rights abuses” (Aug. 13<sup>th</sup>), “our demand,” “we will takes steps that the ban is respected,” “making aggressors pay,” and “pressures for peace” (Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>). President Clinton similarly uses highly rhetorical terms to give the appearance of legitimate action. For example, he mentions that the U.S. has “been seriously reviewing our options,” has “a much tougher... resolution,” and will “finalize the extensive review” (Apr. 23<sup>rd</sup>). He also states, “we’ll just have to see what happens” and “reaffirmed” (May 22<sup>nd</sup>). There is also the repeated use of the terms ‘must’ and ‘should’ throughout both President Bush and President Clinton’s statements, which holds rhetoric power but requires no legitimate enforcement.

#### Complex & Convolutd

At the same time, President Bush repeatedly describes the conflict, and any military response, as ‘complex’ and ‘complicated.’ This rhetorical choice acts to reinforce for the American public that issues of foreign policy are beyond their comprehension and therefore they should not attempt to make an assessment on the best

course of action. In this way, he alleviates public demand for action through the preemptive denial of any suggestions.

In his August 6<sup>th</sup> statement, Bush calls the violence a “complex, convoluted conflict” and emphasizes that there is no “easy or...simple solution” and “those who understand the nature of this conflict” realize this. He later calls it “difficult to resolve,” and even explicitly states that “an enduring solution cannot be imposed by force” to excuse any inaction. When responding to a question from a reporter, he again states, “this is a very complicated military question, very, very complicated indeed.”

In his August 13<sup>th</sup> statement, he refers to it as a “very complex, very agonizing, and very dangerous conflict,” and on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, he again emphasizes, “there is no easy solution to the Bosnian conflict,” and therefore one should not be expected. In his September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1995 public address, President Clinton reminds the public that despite some advances in peace negotiations, “there are many difficult obstacles still to overcome.” This exploitation of Presidential ethos helps to alleviate any public demand for definitive action by reinforcing the perception that the President automatically knows more than the average person.

### **From Europe to Africa**

While chronologically the last of the genocides analyzed for this project, the genocide marginalization genre was originally developed based on rhetoric surrounding the Rwandan genocide (1994). The horrific violence and blatant U.S. inaction brought this conflict to the forefront of study. Lasting only one hundred days and with a staggering casualty rate, the Rwandan genocide is an important point of study for Presidential rhetoric on humanitarian crises.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### RWANDAN GENOCIDE (1994)

In the spring of 1994, over the course of one hundred days, there occurred in Rwanda what has been called the “fastest, most efficient killing spree of the twentieth century” (Power, 2001, p. 1). An estimated 800,000 men, women and children were systematically hunted down and massacred on the basis of deep-seated cultural divisions. The ethnic cleansing that occurred during this violent time was both state-sponsored and chillingly systematic. Set lists of names targeted for elimination were created, consisting of minority tribe members as well as individuals in opposition to the extremist government in place. However, members of the United Nations, the United States and other international governments chose to largely ignore and redefine the unfolding genocide in Rwanda. It was treated instead as illogical, but typical, African tribalism. The way in which Washington framed the unfolding Rwandan genocide influenced how Americans viewed, and reacted to, the conflict. In retrospect, the repercussions of American inaction in Rwanda were immeasurable. The international community, in particular the United Nations and the United States, so mishandled this clear case of genocide that it has left a mark on the political conscience.

Until 1998, when Clinton issued a formal apology at the Kigali Airport in Rwanda, the Clinton administration repeatedly sidestepped qualifying the Rwandan massacre as genocide. This redefinition came from the understanding within Washington that “genocide demands action. Tribal warfare does not” (Fair & Parks, 2001, p.36). The few public statements that were released by the Clinton administration tended to be brief and said nothing of genocide, until after the fighting had subsided.

With such little exposure to information, the American public's demand for response was minimal. Washington's de-emphasis of the situation's urgency allowed for the four-year time lapse before any meaningful rhetorical response was given.

This analysis is based on the President Clinton's rhetorical dissuasion of public demand for engagement in the Rwandan genocide. This chapter will (1) explicate the background and conditions leading to the 1994 Rwandan genocide; (2) explore previous scholarship on Presidential wartime and crisis rhetoric; (3) discuss the elements and techniques used to create rhetorical genres; (4) develop a generic criticism through an analysis of President Clinton's discourse on Rwanda; (5) discuss the ethical and epistemic consequences of President Clinton's rhetorical marginalization of genocide; and (6) discuss the significance of expanding on previous generic criticism methodologies.

### Planting the Seeds of Genocide

The Western perspective on tribal conflict is that African backwardness is the root cause. However, the Rwandan genocide has its origins in Colonial occupation, as is the case with much of modern day African and Balkan instability. Up until the late-1950s, Belgian Colonial powers occupying Rwanda engaged in social division tactics, through which traditional societal divides were exploited and clearly defined roles in a hierarchy were enforced. The Tutsi, the more privileged group, included those Rwandans possessing "whiter" features, specifically lighter skin and smaller nose widths. Despite only constituting seventeen percent of the population, the Belgians supplied this minority group with ruling power and wealth. At the same time, the Hutu, the underprivileged majority, were harshly exploited for the benefit of the Tutsi. As

rationalization for these unjust policies, the Belgian Colonial powers drew upon the theories of biological racism that existed in the 1800s. Commonly used as justification for White imperialism, these theories argued that the more “African” a population, the more inferior their intelligence and religious beliefs. Using these concepts, the Belgians constructed the Tutsi as “Afri-Caucasian” and therefore deserving of greater privilege, as they were less “African” than the Hutu (Hancock, 2002, p. 116).

During the period of global decolonization, the Belgians were hesitant to relinquish their control over the African colony of Rwanda. When the shift to independence finally came in 1959, it was sudden and the Belgians had made no effort to prepare a transition government. As a result, the move to independence brought with it a violent struggle for power. In the Western world, this civil war was positioned as a localized Hutu-Tutsi conflict, a viewpoint that would carry over into the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Power, 2001). In the end, the Hutu managed to seize control of political power and initiated the persecution of the local Tutsi population. As a result, nearly half of the Tutsi population was exiled to neighboring Uganda. Over the next three decades resentment grew among the refugees and resistance armies were formed. A few times during this unstable phase, Tutsi rebel groups invaded northern Rwanda, but never with enough force to cause any more than momentary upheaval and the loss of more lives. As punishment for these refugee invasions, the Hutu launched periodic massacres of the domestic Tutsi population (Shawcross, 2000; Power, 2001).

The resentment that had built during the time of Colonial occupation was shaping the post-Independence environment in Rwanda, perpetuating and deepening the cultural divisions. For a little more than a decade, the ruling Hutu implemented an

overall system of Tutsi exploitation. In 1973, however, a young Hutu military officer named Juvenal Habyarimana headed a coup, which ultimately succeeded and served to shift political power to the northwestern region of Rwanda. Although this triggered resentment among other Hutu political groups and the Tutsi population, both domestic and abroad, the local violence against the Tutsi remaining in Rwanda was largely ended during his fifteen-year rule (Kuperman, 2000).

In October of 1990, however, the stability that existed under Habyarimana's regime was compromised by a Tutsi expatriate rebel invasion of northern Rwanda. This army was made up of mostly Tutsi refugees based out of Uganda, known as the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the political arm. Surprisingly, this rebel army made more headway against the majority Hutu Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) by 1993 than had any previous invasion. At the same time, international pressure from the United Nations to end the high-casualty civil war prompted Habyarimana to consider a political agreement backed by the international community, which called for a ceasefire and at least a superficial reconciliation of the two warring sides (Kuperman, 2000; Shawcross, 2000).

In addressing the escalating violence in the Rwandan civil war, the United Nations issued the Arusha Accord, which would grant some political representation for the Tutsi population. This peace Accord was initiated on July 22, 1992, but unfortunately, these political developments only served to intensify Hutu frustration. In considering the Accord, "the majority Hutus concluded that the equality of power offered by the Accord would cause Hutu government officials to lose their political positions to Tutsis...[which] would weaken their political domination" (Obidegwu,

2003, p. 6). The U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda, or UNAMIR, was already stationed in Rwanda, but assisted little in reaching these agreements, as their “rules of engagement...were generally interpreted to bar the use of force” (Kuperman, 2000, p. 4). Once the violence broke out, however, ten Belgian UN peacekeepers were kidnapped and executed by Hutu extremists who were acting as protectors of the opposition Prime Minister. Unfortunately, “these deaths and the emerging chaos in Kigali prompted Western governments to evacuate their nationalities” (Kuperman, 2000, p. 4). As a result, Western governments had even less stake in the fate of Rwanda. The United Nations chose to “continue to recognize members of the *genocidaire* government as legitimate official representatives of the country” (Thompson, 2007, p. 28), which hindered any real action against them.

Extremist factions of the Hutu government took early provisions to prevent the potential power-sharing that would occur if the Arusha Accord was put into practice. They produced highly-trained militias and initiated what would prove to be one of the most important perpetrators in the Rwanda genocide: the anti-Tutsi hate radio, Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines. On April 6, 1994, just as Habyarimana was beginning to acquiesce to the Accord, his plane was suddenly and mysteriously shot out of the sky. Hutu extremists are suspected, although this has yet to be proven. By that evening, the one hundred days of genocide had begun. The extermination happened quickly. The majority of the casualties occurring in the first two weeks of the violence, destroying nearly half of the entire Tutsi population before April 21 (Kuperman, 2000; Shawcross, 2000).

### The Problems of Peacekeeping

In the early 1990s, United Nations Peacekeeping operations were essentially a series of disappointing failures. The international community, especially the United States, was largely disillusioned and hesitant to engage in any future humanitarian intervention efforts. In 1993, an ostensibly uncomplicated peace operation in Somalia went horribly wrong, ending with the death of eighteen young American soldiers. The reaction of the Clinton administration, and the American people, indicated that there was little tolerance for failed peacekeeping missions in Africa. As a result, the Clinton administration made the decision, only a year before the Rwandan genocide, “to oppose peacekeeping...arguing that tribal warfare was so intense that the number of forces needed to stop it would be too high for public opinion to accept” (Sciolino, 1994, p. 1). Robert Oakley, who had acted as Clinton’s special envoy to Somalia, explained, “Somalia showed just how difficult and dangerous the mission of saving a country can be” (as cited in Sciolino, 1994, p. 1). As they were still reeling from the disaster in Somalia when the Rwandan genocide began to unfold, the U.S. government’s low tolerance for risk- became paralyzing (Hoey, 1995).

Since there was very little political will to intervene in the Rwandan civil conflict, the strategy employed by the Clinton administration was to keep the international and domestic community’s “expectations as low as possible” (Sciolino, 1994, p. 1). As the genocide quickly unfolded, the Clinton administration “studiously...avoided using the term [genocide] in its Rwanda policy discussions, preferring any label that might provide some cover against critics of the U.S. government’s nonintervention” (Fair and Parks, 2001, p.10) This approach was

representative of the overall unwillingness of Western governments to rhetorically commit themselves to military action. This would partially have been done through the recognition of the violence in Rwanda as genocide. Defined as state-backed “calculated and directed annihilation of groups perceived to be a political, economic, or cultural threat to the state” (Fair & Parks, 2001, p.10), the Hutu extermination of the Tutsi population undeniably fit the description.

## GENOCIDE MARGINALIZATION GENRE

In an attempt to develop Genocide Marginalization as generic criticism, an extensive textual analysis was conducted on the substantive and stylistic characteristics of eight pieces of political rhetoric. Using the Web site *The American Presidency Project*, a search was conducted for public statements delivered by President Clinton in 1994 that mentioned or directly addressed the situation in Rwanda. This was done with the purpose of contrasting the political rhetoric with the timeline of genocide. There were eight statements in total delivered between April 7 and July 17 that were analyzed for the purpose of this paper.<sup>6</sup>

The public statements' general function was to alleviate growing public concern enough to prevent any demand for action. In doing so, the unifying rhetorical purpose was the exclusion of specific loaded terms and a focus on ethnocentrism. The rhetorical power of silence is often underestimated, but it can at times be even more powerful than the words included. Through the omission of the term 'genocide' or any recognition of concern for the safety of Rwandan citizens, President Clinton effectively dehumanized the suffering. Instead of discussing the nature of the conflict, President Clinton's discourse focuses on the importance of removing American citizens and diplomats from the hostile situation. As such, the political rhetoric redirects the focus of U.S. foreign policy through appealing to natural ethnocentrism. Washington promises and fulfills the

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<sup>6</sup> Timeline of Significant Statements on Rwanda

1. **April 7, 1994:** William Clinton
2. **April 8, 1994:** William Clinton
3. **April 9, 1994:** William Clinton
4. **April 10, 1994:** William Clinton
5. **April 12, 1994:** William Clinton
6. **April 20, 1994:** William Clinton
7. **April 30, 1994:** William Clinton
8. **June 27, 1994:** William Clinton

action of rescuing the Americans, but this is not military intervention on behalf of the suffering Rwandans. Through this, however, the administration alleviated the demand for a rhetorical response enough that it eliminated the call for military action.

While not all consistent in length and type, the public statements on the Rwandan genocide are unified by a single organizing principle. In other words, the substantive, stylistic, and situational elements within the discourses worked collectively to dissuade the public's demand for military action in Rwanda. This was specifically through the deliberate exclusion of the classification of the violence as 'genocide' in all statements delivered during the hundred days of violence.

A common rhetorical strategy is repetition, which implies "a situation in which a key idea must be established and emphasized" (Campbell & Jamieson, 1978, p. 18). Generally, this is a word or phrase that appears on multiple occasions throughout a piece of rhetoric. However, in the case of humanitarian crises and the President's desire to remain uncommitted to military action, the significance lies in what repeatedly does not appear. In strategically leaving out the term 'genocide' as a classification for the violence, the rhetor subtly emphasizes his desire to remain uninvolved. The different lines of argument used by President Clinton during the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda created for the American public a "non-crisis," despite its catastrophic consequences and strong moral implications.

The American President has set rhetorical choices that are appropriate for particular situations (Windt, 1973). Specifically, there are certain fundamental lines of argument that the President must use in situations where military intervention is unfavorable. These rhetorical strategies function to prevent public demands for military

action during times of morally compelling crises. This assertion is based on President Clinton's rhetorical dissuasion of public demand for engagement in the Rwandan genocide. The guiding lines of argument within Clinton's discourse can be characterized as; (1) the implicit dismissal of the conflict as characteristic of African backwardness; (2) the focus on American safety concerns emphasizes that the public's responsibility is first and foremost to fellow Americans; (3) Clinton arguably leverages the ethos of the Presidency to give the public rhetorical permission to evade moral humanitarian obligations

### **It's Typical**

The United States has historically positioned itself as the 'protector of the weak.' It has taken it upon itself to spread democracy. On multiple occasions, the U.S. has forcefully imposed democratic political systems on developing countries under the pretense of 'freedom' and 'equality.' If, for whatever reason, the implemented government does not hold, any future problems are blamed on the country's unwillingness to embrace American ideals. It becomes, in a way, a 'they got what they deserved' justification. Through implicit emphasis of the country's failure at integrating American values, Washington is able to evade military intervention if the country faces problems in the future. It is a similar case if U.S.-sponsored peace negotiations fail, no matter how realistic or legitimate they might have been. Again, the country becomes deserving of future problems. It becomes easier for the American public to rationalize inaction once the blame is placed internally. Individually, these different strategies can be found within other rhetoric. However, it is "the recurrence of the forms together in constellation" (Jamieson & Campbell, 1978, p. 20) that makes a genre distinct.

### A Fate Deserved

In the years prior to the genocide, Rwanda was engaged in ceasefire negotiations with the United Nations. These culminated in the Arusha Accords, which required Rwanda to increase equity in political representation, specifically through adopting a democratic political system. However, the genocide was initiated before these goals were realized (Shawcross, 2000). As a result, the Clinton administration was able to position the genocide as a consequence of Rwanda's failure at peace and democracy. It was reasoned that Rwanda had essentially 'rejected' American values and was suffering as a result. While recognizing this as a terrible consequence, President Clinton still subtly placed the blame on the victims.

This subtle blaming is accomplished through the juxtaposition of descriptive words regarding Rwandan violence and American value terms. Exemplary of this stylistic element is the April 7<sup>th</sup> statements, the "Presidents were seeking means to end the bloodshed...and facilitate a movement towards peace and democracy" and "these tragedies must not derail Rwanda...from pursuing national reconciliation and democracy." Also, on June 27<sup>th</sup>, Clinton argues that Rwanda is an "extreme example of tensions that can destroy generations and disrupt progress and delay democracy." The word choice comparison of 'bloodshed,' 'tragedies,' 'derail,' 'destroy,' 'disrupt,' and 'delay' against 'facilitate a movement,' 'reconciliation,' and 'progress' demonstrates strategic juxtaposition and the framing of democracy as synonymous with forward movement. The indication, then, is that the violence would not have happened had democracy been allowed to develop and bring Rwanda out of its backwardness.

### Typical Tribalism

In Clinton's few public statements on Rwanda, the conflict was subtly positioned as a 'tragic,' but expected, consequence of African backwardness. This is never explicitly stated, of course, but is implied through subtle word choice and overall form. Specifically, President Clinton's public statements repeatedly allude to Rwanda's violent history through numerous references to intertribal conflict. The administration never explicitly explains the conflict as African tribalism, but the repeated mention of Rwanda's past instability resonates with deep-seated American prejudices. In this way, the rhetorical choices exploited the American misconception of tribal conflict as 'typical' in the developing world. When considered as a continual struggle, the American public is able to understand the U.S. inability to take on and resolve all such struggles. Thus, it was made easier for the American public to qualify the conflict as 'just another' Rwandan civil war. Without the urgent threat of genocide as compared to other conflicts, the American public was able to justify the government's reluctance to interfere.

The terms used to describe Rwanda's sociopolitical landscape, when viewed as a whole, create the framework for tribalism as the root cause. The words chosen to describe the violence carry strong negative connotations and are repeated throughout the statements. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, Clinton describes President Habyarimana's efforts "to end the bloodshed in their troubled countries." The term 'troubled' is a particularly important inclusion, as it implies a deep foundation of problems. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, Clinton calls for the Rwandan leaders "to reject the senseless and criminal violence that continues to plague their country." In both the April 30<sup>th</sup> and the April 7<sup>th</sup> statements,

Rwandan intertribal conflict is described as having ‘plagued’ the country, suggesting a long-term, systemic culture of violence. On April 20<sup>th</sup>, Clinton discusses general American policy in Africa. Towards the end he states, “we’re terribly troubled by Rwanda now but it wasn’t so many months ago” that U.S. focus was on mass-murder in Burundi. Again, this discussion of Rwanda as yet another African conflict the U.S. must deal with helps excuse American inaction.

While this choice was important as a substantive element, it was the stylistic strategy that gave the phrases rhetorical significance. Specifically, lengths of time were used in conjunction with descriptive words to emphasize the continual nature of violence. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, Clinton stated that prior to the Rwandan President’s plane crash, he “intended to bring an end to the civil wars that have plagued [Rwanda] for more than three decades.” The violence is described as having continued “for more than three decades” and the Rwandan people as “long-suffering.” Each time the seriousness of the situation was explicitly recognized, the audience was quickly reminded of Rwanda’s troubled past. By giving the impression that violence like this ‘happens all the time,’ President Clinton was able to reduce the situation’s urgency and the need for response.

#### Actions Speak Louder Than Words

While implicitly criticizing Rwandan tribalism and failure to embrace American ideals, the United States was compelled to explicitly demonstrate its continued commitment to peace and democratization. As an issue of international political consequence, it was impossible for Washington to fully ignore the violence in Rwanda. The U.S. has, as a wealthy and militarily powerful country, an obligation to fund and promote peacekeeping operations (Kennedy, 2006). Despite the government’s hesitance

to engage in military intervention, the international community will react unfavorably if Washington were to make this unwillingness known. To circumvent this difficulty, the President instead makes empty promises laden with heavily emotional words. These appeals are used to convince the public, and the world, of the American dedication to international peace and security without requiring immediate military action.

President Clinton repeatedly uses emotional terms to describe his feelings on the Rwandan violence. Specifically, he states, “I strongly condemn these actions” “I am shocked and deeply saddened” and “I am...horrified” in his April 7<sup>th</sup> statement. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, he again reassures the world, “I am deeply concerned.” In addition to conveying his disapproval, Clinton makes purely rhetorical assurances that make it appear as though the U.S. was taking definitive action. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, he “reaffirm[s] the American commitment to participate in renewed negotiations under the Arusha framework” and “call[s] on the Rwandan army and the Rwandan Patriotic Front to agree to an immediate ceasefire and return to negotiations.” On April 9<sup>th</sup>, he had asked the public to “join... in praying...for a return to peace in Rwanda.” The transitive nature of the words, ‘reaffirm,’ ‘call on,’ and ‘praying’ all indicate that the U.S. government’s “commitment” to help can be considered an empty promise.

### **Emphasis on Ethnocentrism**

A clear prioritization of American concerns is established in President Clinton’s public statements. Nearly every piece of rhetoric focuses principally, if not entirely, on the assurance of the safety of Americans in Rwanda. Through this, Clinton emphasizes the ethnocentric nature of American concerns as, first and foremost, about other Americans. This approach demonstrates the disproportional value allotted American, as

opposed to African, individuals. In each discourse, President Clinton reassures the audience of the government's continued efforts to keep the Americans in Rwanda safe. In this way, the American public is lead to a dangerously narrow perspective on the problems in Rwanda. The public was then able to catalog U.S. successes in Rwanda only as small military efforts to help American citizens.

Specific phrases appear recurrently throughout the different statements. Most notably, Clinton repeats basic variations of the phrase, 'we are very concerned' and 'we are doing everything we can to assure the safety of Americans in Rwanda.' On April 8<sup>th</sup>, Clinton justifies his brief mention of the Rwandan conflict by saying, "I want to mention it only because there are a sizable number of Americans there" and continues in his statement to "assure the families of those who are there that we are doing everything we possibly can...to take all appropriate steps to try to assure the safety of our citizens there." On April 9<sup>th</sup>, Clinton once again states that he is "very concerned about their [Americans in Rwanda] safety, and I want you to know that we're doing all we can to ensure their safety." On April 10<sup>th</sup>, he again, more than once, repeats the similar phrase, by stating, "we've been very concerned about the safety of Americans in Rwanda." These phrases comprise the majority of the rhetorical statements, making it clear where American priorities were. At the same time, the rhetorical strategy of omission is equally important in developing public opinion. The general exclusion of consideration for Rwandan's wellbeing worked in conjunction with the emphasis on Americans to shape the public perspective on the Rwandan conflict.

Reframing the Rwandan genocide as a threat primarily to the Americans in Rwanda enabled the U.S. government to take definitive military action on a much

smaller and less significant scale. Small accomplishments in the rescue of American citizens were glorified as important U.S. victories. As an example, on April 12<sup>th</sup>, Clinton states, “I am pleased to report that these [rescue] operations were successful, that no hostilities were encountered, and that no casualties were suffered by U.S. forces in this operation.” However, the successful extraction of a few hundred Americans from a country where millions are being murdered hardly seems like a grand victory.

It can be argued that this emphasis on American safety created, in essence, a ‘controlled’ rhetorical situation. In other words, Clinton was able to guide the public reaction so demands remained more manageable. Through the completion of American rescue missions, Washington gave the impression that it had ‘solved’ the problem in Rwanda through effectively responding to the exigency. This is again a consequence of ethnocentric American viewpoints and policies. It is impossible to compare the rescue of 250 American citizens to the extermination of nearly one million Rwandans and call it a success. However, the clear prioritization of and detailed updates on the Americans in Rwanda enabled a large portion of the American public to feel satisfied with the government response and not demand further military involvement.

### **A President’s Morality**

The President holds a unique position of power over the American people, as the Presidency presupposes possession of strong moral values. As such, Americans look to the President for guidance on ethical as well as political issues, and generally trust the legitimacy of his decisions. Specifically, in the case of a crisis, Americans turn to the President for moral direction. However, the recognition of a situation as a humanitarian crisis provokes strong moral reactions and demands for a resolution. In certain

situations, the American government has taken it upon itself to solve the other countries' problems through deep ground-level entanglement. If the government does not wish to militarily engage in the prevention of the crisis, however, the President can use the ethos of the office to convince the public it is morally correct at times *not* to be concerned with typical humanitarian obligations. This is generally done subtly through the redefinition of morally significant terms and deemphasizing the crisis urgency.

### A 'Situation'

Redefinition of terms is an important rhetorical strategy for facilitating moral acceptance of immoral action. According to Windt (1973), if political language is vague enough through redefinition, it becomes easier for the audience to rationalize the implications of controversial policy decisions. Specifically, the Clinton administration redefined 'genocide' in Rwanda as the 'situation,' removing the inherently ethical facet. Redefinition is achieved through constant repetition of the new term in place of the old to the point that the old loses all political significance. Through the use of redefinition techniques, the President is able to further convince the public of his policy decisions. This is done under the assumption, if the President does not qualify the violence as 'genocide' then the potentiality of public demand for military action is greatly reduced.

Throughout each public statement, the developing genocide is clearly established as the "situation" in Rwanda. In the President's April 8<sup>th</sup> discourse, he refers to the violence as the 'situation' four times within the short statement. At different times, the 'situation' is qualified as "very tense" (April 8<sup>th</sup>) "very difficult" (April 7<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>), and "very tragic" (April 9<sup>th</sup>), however it still remains morally acceptable. This

repetition in his early public statements firmly establishes the perception of the Rwandan genocide as a ‘situation.’

### Just One More Thing

Through rhetorically deemphasizing the violence in Rwanda, President Clinton assured the public that it required no military intervention, except on behalf of Americans. The sentences used in breaching the topic are arguably the most significant strategies for de-prioritizing Rwandan conflict. On multiple occasions, President Clinton approaches the subject with, “Let me just mention one more thing, if I might” (April 8<sup>th</sup>), “Finally, let me say a brief word” (April 9<sup>th</sup>), “Let me make one other comment, if I might” (April 10<sup>th</sup>) Also, through the repeated use of the phrases, “if I might” and “I mention it only because,” it seems as if Clinton is asking the audience’s forgiveness for even discussing something of such little pertinence.

The discourses’ length is a further indication of the crisis’ marginalization. As closing thoughts for much longer statements, the public statements were typically no longer than a brief paragraph or two. As such, Rwanda was positioned as a political afterthought. For the American public, this is an indication of the President’s ethical judgment of the crisis. If their moral leader does not consider it worthy of heavy consideration, it is not the place of the American public to question this. Therefore, through the rhetorical redefinition and marginalization of the Rwandan genocide, President Clinton was able to convince the public of its insignificance as an ethical consideration.

### **An Apology Too Late**

On March 25, 1998, President Clinton delivered an apology speech to the people of Rwanda. Known as the “Clinton apology,” this speech came nearly four years after the genocide. He spoke from the Kigali airport with what appeared to be strong feelings of remorse. The language and stylistic choices within the speech allowed for easy dramatization and emotional appeal. Clinton’s use of Theodore Windt’s (1973) “bear any burden, pay any price” strategy As such, it remains difficult to tell whether this speech represented a legitimate expression of sadness for the American failure in Rwanda.

In his speech, President Clinton essentially suggests that the U.S. had actually done a great deal to limit the genocide, but these efforts were still not enough. However, in reality, the U.S. government not only withheld troops, it actively lobbied in the UN Security Council to greatly limit the peacekeeping operations in Rwanda (Kuperman, 2000). Clinton also implied that American inaction had stemmed from the government’s lack of knowledge about the violence, which again has since been disproved. There are clear public records indicating an influx of information about the mounting violence just prior to and during the genocide (Power, 2001).

Interestingly, Clinton also repeatedly contradicts the lines of argument used to convince the public in 1994. Early in the speech, he states, “it is important that the world hear...[the genocide was] most certainly not the result of ancient tribal struggles” (p. 1), and later, “The international community, together with the nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy” (p. 1). These two statements offer the opposite perspective that was implied during the genocide. In addressing the

American refusal to quantify the violence, Clinton states, “We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide” (p. 1). However, it was not an innocent mistake but in fact was conscious political choice; quantifying violence as ‘genocide’ compels the United States to act under international law. In retrospect, it is easy for the President to recognize what should have been done. However, this is not enough. The apology speech came far too late, beyond even the intention to remain militarily uninvolved.

The remainder of “Clinton’s apology” laid out the framework for America’s comprehensive plan for future genocide prevention. Essentially, this is a declaration of ‘bear any burden, pay any price’ (Windt, 1978). Although alluring and optimistic, the promises Clinton makes have yet to be realized. The second pledge Clinton made to Rwanda and the world is, “We must as an international community have the ability to act when genocide threatens” (p. 2). However, there continues to be humanitarian crises in Africa, and President Clinton’s words once again are only empty promises in a world where resolute action is needed.

### **The Legacy of Words**

As Alan Kuperman (2000) poignantly states, “several years after mass killings in Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda, the United States is still searching for a comprehensive policy to address deadly communal conflicts” (p. 1). The only consensus within Washington, at this point, is the understanding that situations of genocide require humanitarian prevention and relief efforts. Peacekeeping operations are complicated conglomerations of political and ethical considerations, but the

potential for unintended consequences should not deter American deployment of humanitarian relief forces to prevent genocide.

Still, the U.S. continues to be faced with a number of unanswered questions, particularly the uncertainty of whether American intervention would have been effective in the preservation of thousands of lives. On the one hand, it has been argued that the majority of Tutsi deaths could have been prevented, had the United States immediately interfered with strong force, either unilaterally or in conjunction with UN (Kennedy, 2006). However, this assertion is purely hypothetical. It is also possible that U.S. intervention would have in fact made little difference at all in the termination of genocide. In the end, however, the possibility still exists that decisive U.S. military intervention could have saved some of the 800,000 lives lost in the Rwandan genocide (Powers, 2001).

It is incredibly difficult to cope with the moral implications of genocide. As a U.S. citizen, even the idea of such mass killing seems impossible. It was easier, then, for the American public to believe the President's indication that the violence in Rwanda was not so severe. Specifically, through the dismissal of the genocide as a consequence of African backwardness, the American public was able to accept Clinton's lack of definitive action. In sum, the results of the political rhetoric and American reaction to the Rwandan genocide are troubling. Not only was a horrific genocide essentially ignored, but the emphasis on an ethnocentric perspective to humanitarian crises both reflected and predicted the American approach to genocide in the developing world.

In retrospect, increased transparency would have allowed for the true nature of

the humanitarian disaster to be realized, and would be the case in future crises both domestically and abroad. With increased access to information, moral responsibility would be more easily recognized and the American public would be given the chance to exercise its democratic role.

The Rwandan genocide has left a mark on the political consciousness within the United States, especially on members of the Clinton administration involved in the Rwanda policy decisions (Power, 2001). It is clear now that mistakes were made and the rhetorical marginalization of mass-murder was deplorable from a humanitarian perspective. Today in Rwanda, also, there is a legacy of human rights violations and an HIV/AIDS crisis as reminders of the 1994 genocide. For much of the U.S. population, the details of the horrific event are still unclear. It took many years before the first books and films on the genocide were even released. This feeling of guilt and remorse will do nothing, however, to reverse the widespread violence. Instead, this legacy can and should be used in policy decision-making on contemporary and future humanitarian crises.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF GENOCIDE MARGINALIZATION

In future prevention and alleviation of international humanitarian crises, it is necessary for the United States to prioritize on the basis of moral responsibility, not political and economic value. While it is important for a country to gain strategic advantage on the international platform, large-scale humanitarian atrocities should be considered more important to maintenance of world order. The U.S. has the capacity to engage in relief efforts, and as such, its inaction is greatly inexcusable. Western reluctance to invest resources in ethno-political conflict prevention reflects the lack of interest in strategically unimportant areas. In the future, it is necessary for the U.S. government to transcend historical racist and ethnocentric tendencies, and to realize its ethical responsibility.

#### Empowering the Public

It is the responsibility of the American President to use the office's strong rhetorical power for the prevention of humanitarian crises, and not instead allow for its continuation. Choosing to take preventative action only in countries that are politically or economically valuable to the United States is a dangerous precedent to set. Espousing empty promises of action is not enough. The American government should legitimately demonstrate commitment to the prevention of future humanitarian crises. As Windt (1973) discusses, the Presidency comes with an automatic rhetorical power, and it is immoral to use it to minimize large-scale human suffering.

The Presidents' rhetorical responses framed the three genocides as marginally concerning for the American public. Without the American public pressuring for

humanitarian relief efforts, the demand to alleviate the humanitarian atrocities was largely dissuaded. As a result, there was little motivation for the government to interfere. However, if the discourse on the genocides is credited as the only prevention of a call to action, the American public's autonomy is greatly underestimated. Despite the power of political rhetoric, audiences retain the ability to form independent opinion.

It is the responsibility of the American people, as consumers of Presidential rhetoric, to hold the government accountable for its inaction during humanitarian crises. Democracy allows for a political sphere in which inhumane behavior can be refuted, not just accepted. As politicians are ultimately dependent upon favorable public opinion, political rhetoric is in large part shaped by the current domestic atmosphere. With issues of heavy moral consequence, such as genocide, it is no longer an exercise of autonomous thought, but a requirement as an ethical person.

The legacy left by the genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda is particularly significant when considering the continued genocide in Darfur. The violence is structurally quite similar to Rwanda, in particular. Despite the legal definition of the violence in Darfur as genocide nearly two years ago, no legitimate attempts have been made at resolution. Regardless of the moral implications made clear by the previous genocides' legacy, the qualification of conflict as 'genocide' legally requires action. (Shawcross, 2000). As such, the international community, and particularly the U.S.'s, continued inaction is troubling. Unfortunately, the U.N. Security Council has made little progress in the alleviation of the violence in Darfur. The Darfur conflict represents a perfect example of where the lessons from Rwanda and the previous genocides should be applied in a productive and morally legitimate way.

## CONCLUSION

These in-depth textual analyses, and the development of the genocide marginalization genre, are an important contribution to the study of generic criticism. The creation of this genre serves as an extension of Theodore Windt's (1973) *International Crisis Genre* and the understanding of Presidential rhetoric criticism in general. Windt's generic criticism discusses the President's ability to create an international 'crisis' in order to gain support for aggressive or controversial political decisions. The rhetorical strategies employed act together to convince the American public of the legitimacy of potentially controversial policies. While his genre offers insight into the ethos of the Presidency and the rhetorical nature of crises, it falls short of addressing issues of humanitarian consequence. At the same time, Theodore Windt (1973) and other contemporary critics have centered their studies on either international crises, usually in the ideological context of the Cold War, or on domestic humanitarian crises, such as Hurricane Katrina. However, the consideration of International humanitarian crises is conspicuously absent from communication studies today.

Genocide marginalization genre illustrates how Presidents traditionally respond to humanitarian crises when military intervention is politically unfavorable. The Presidents' development of a "non-crisis" through specific rhetorical strategies serves as a means of alleviating public demand to take decisive action. The genocide marginalization genre offers an explanation for inaction in the face of humanitarian atrocities. The existence of a genre has been made apparent through the analyses of the Cambodian and Bosnian genocides based on the rhetorical choices established in the Rwandan genocide. The four Presidents, when discussing three distinctive genocides,

have repeated these rhetorical patterns. With the genre established, it becomes a possibility to predict whether a U.S. President will take action against genocide in the future. If the President's rhetoric follows the three lines of argument within the genocide marginalization genre, a simple analysis of public statements on the crisis will indicate whether or not decisive military intervention will take place.

Through the development of the genocide marginalization methodology, a means of studying potentially and clearly mishandled humanitarian crises is made available. The establishment of organizing elements in American Presidential rhetoric on genocide also offers a starting point for increased expansion into different humanitarian crises. There will likely be some shared elements, but it is likely that the methodology could be taken in a new direction. With these extensions, it is important to continue taking steps towards a greater understanding of, and ability to effectively deal with, unfolding humanitarian crises.

APPENDIX  
*Dissolution of Austro-Hungarian Empire After WWI*



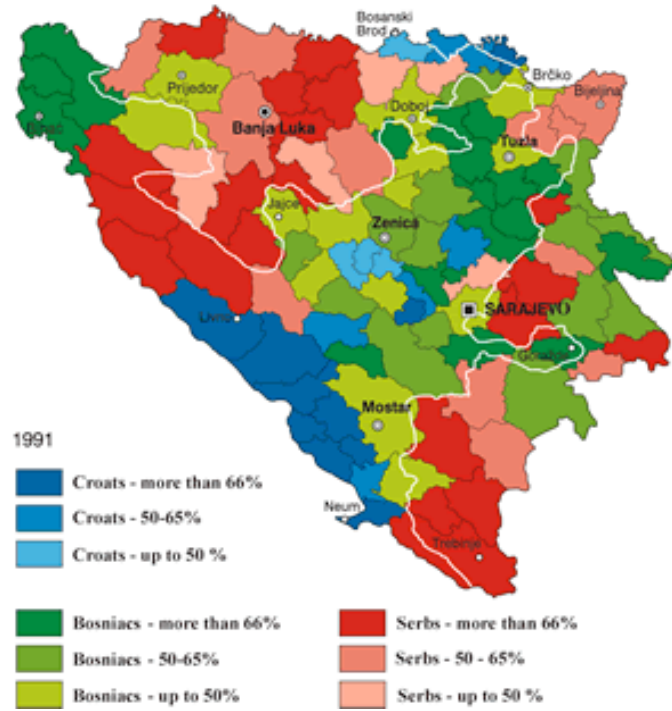
Sotirovic, Vladislav B., Ph.D. (Associate University Professor at Mykolas Romeris University), Dissolution of Austria-Hungary after the WWI [Map], Vilnius, Lithuania.

*Map of Former Yugoslavia (2006)*



Sotirovic, Vladislav B., Ph.D. (Associate University Professor at Mykolas Romeris University), Former Yugoslavia in 2006 [Map], Vilnius, Lithuania.

***Bosnia-Herzegovina Pre-Genocide (1991)***



Sotirovic, Vladislav B., Ph.D. (Associate University Professor at Mykolas Romeris University), Ethnoadministrative Map of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1991) [Map], Vilnius, Lithuania.

***Bosnia-Herzegovina Post-Genocide (1996)***



Sotirovic, Vladislav B., Ph.D. (Associate University Professor at Mykolas Romeris University), Ethnoadministrative Map of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1996) [Map], Vilnius, Lithuania.

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