

BOOK REVIEW

Joyce E. Leader. *From Hope to Horror: Diplomacy and the Making of the Rwanda Genocide*. Sterling, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2020. xxiii + 384 pp. Map. Bibliography. Index. \$50.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781640123250.

Joyce E. Leader's volume *From Hope to Horror: Diplomacy and the Making of the Rwanda Genocide* is part of the Diplomats and Diplomacy series written by former US diplomats. Leader served in US embassies in Europe and Africa, including in Rwanda from August 1991 to April 1994. In 2001, Leader published the first memoir of her experiences in Rwanda, titled *Rwanda's Struggle for Democracy and Peace, 1991–1994*, in which she narrated the developments that led to the Rwanda genocide. *From Hope to Horror* is written from the perspective of international diplomacy, discussing the international community's failure to prevent the outbreak of violence and the subsequent genocide that occurred between April and July 1994. The author relied on information drawn from study notes, notes of meetings, diary entries, declassified government cables and documents, and firsthand accounts of the survivors of the genocide (xiv-xv). In doing so, Leader provides a compelling account of one of the most horrific cases of violence and mass murder to occur in post-Cold War Africa.

There are twenty-three chapters in this volume, organized in two parts. In Part One, Leader historicizes Rwanda's conflict-laden trajectory, from the late colonial to the postcolonial eras. She also tackles Rwanda's transition to democracy in the early 1990s, which culminated in the signing of the power-sharing agreement called the Arusha Accords in August 1993. In Part Two, Leader critically analyzes why diplomatic, mainly American, efforts were unsuccessful in preventing the outbreak of conflict and violence. Leader finishes the book by making a passionate plea about conflict resolution, using the example of the Rwanda genocide, the origins of which lie in the unresolved socio-economic and political power rivalries involving that country's two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. The Hutu make up about 84 percent of Rwanda's population, and the Tutsi about 15 percent. A third ethnic group, the Twa, make up the remaining one percent (2).

The antecedents for the Rwanda Genocide were wide-ranging and historical in nature. The massacre occurred at a time when Rwanda was

undergoing two inter-related transitions, namely, the transition to multiparty democracy, following President Habyarimana's July 1991 constitutional declaration (15–31); and the transition to peace, following the war between the “regular” Rwandan army and the Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), which had operated from neighboring Uganda (34–37). Three main factors precipitated the genocide. First, there was a long history of distrust and antagonism that had existed since the colonial period, when the minority Tutsi received favoritism. At independence, the Hutu majority gained political power and began to oppress the Tutsi. The military coup of 1973 saw the northern Tutsi gain power and declare Rwanda a “one-party state,” while they also oppressed both the southern Tutsi and the Hutu. Such tensions continued into the early 1990s. Second, Rwanda had had no experience of political power-sharing since independence, hence the inter-ethnic divisions. Third, postcolonial Rwanda already had experienced pre-existing cycles of violence between the Hutu and the Tutsi, including one led by the RPF. In the early 1990s, the northern-Hutu-led government of President Juvénal Habyarimana of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) angrily reacted to the RPF insurgency led by Paul Kagame (among others), by arresting and massacring Tutsis resident in Rwanda. A propaganda campaign led by the media, including Radio Rwanda, led to further “demonization” of the Tutsi, both in Rwanda and in exile (3–5, 37–40). Between March 4 and 9, 1992, for instance, about 300 Tutsi were massacred in the Bugesera region (51). On April 6, 1994, Habyarimana's plane was shot down in Kigali, killing all passengers and crew on board, including Habyarimana and Burundi's president, Cyprien Ntaryamira. Extremist Hutu soldiers, militias (especially from the *Interahamwe*), and civilians then unleashed a reign of terror that culminated in the genocide which lasted from April to July of 1994 (7, 254–55).

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the Rwanda conflict failed for several reasons. First, there was the rushed democratization process, urged on by Western powers. The failure to peacefully resolve political tensions encouraged more cases of violence (287–89). Rwandan institutions, such as political parties, the judiciary, and the media, were ill-equipped to oversee the democratization process, as Rwanda had been a *de jure* one-party state since 1973 (289–90). The demands of vulnerable groups and other stakeholders were also overlooked. The Hutu extremist CDR party, for instance, often felt “short-changed,” and hence resorted to using violence before and during the genocide (290–92). Leader calls on diplomats to employ effective means to eliminate ethnic and political tensions. Peace agreements must be both sustainable and broadly agreeable, unlike the “flawed” Arusha agreement (295–300).

Ambassador Leader has produced a comprehensive volume that provides a historical context for the 1994 Rwanda genocide. This work should be of interest to those who study the postcolonial state in Africa, including such elements as state-making and nation-building, civil wars, state instability, and ethno-regional tensions. Students and scholars of international relations, as

well as diplomatic staff working in embassies in conflict-prone countries, will also find use for this volume. One aspect that is missing, however, is a discussion of the experiences of perpetually marginalized groups, including women, youth, and the physically challenged, during the violence-laden years of the early 1990s. That aside, many will find *From Hope to Horror* a fascinating book to read.

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