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Research Process

My research endeavor encompassed a multitude of sources in many locations. Among them, primary and secondary sources, journal articles, military websites, UN documents and newspaper articles. Initially, I searched through Google Books convinced, without proof, that the library would not have a sufficient amount of scholarly research on the Rwandan genocide. Yet, I was limited by the amount of material available online. To alleviate this issue, I proceeded to use Link +—once again, assuming that the books would not be found in the library. I was pleasantly surprised when I was informed of my mistake. Fortunately, my ignorance of the vast array of library sources was corrected at the start of my project and I was able to empty the library of books on the Rwandan genocide. Books such as *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* by Philip Gourevitch were very instrumental in my understanding of the conflict through interviews and international analysis of the competing variable of the UN peacekeeping mission. However, my other case study was the Salvadoran civil war. Following my experience with the Rwandan genocide, I was convinced that I would find copious amounts of books in the library book stacks. Although I did find *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* useful, it was one of only a few books that were available in the library. Ironically, the majority of the books that I found useful were through the Link +. Fortunately, the UNLV libraries have a working relationship with many libraries in Southern California that expeditiously sent me the necessary material to complete my second case study.

            In addition to print sources, I also used a fair amount of scholarly journals from online research databases to which the UNLV library subscribes. JSTOR, Sage, Academic Search Premier, ProQuest and Rand were the most helpful. In fact, many of the journal articles through JSTOR were particularly useful because they were primary sources. Yet, many were written in French as Rwanda is a Francophone nation. Although I initially tried to translate the documents, I decided to use Sage or Academic Search Premier to find those documents translated into English. I would not know the articles existed without first discovering them in French in JSTOR.  In addition, by utilizing these databases I was able to read journal articles from internationally renowned international relations journals such as the *Journal of International Affairs, Foreign Affairs, the Journal of International Criminal Justice Latin American Perspectives,* and*Politics and Society*, which would have otherwise been unavailable to me.

            To supplement print and journal sources, I utilized the ProQuest Historical Newspapers database and the Economist Online to search through newspaper articles. These tools were necessary for a successful project because I needed information on the US response to both of the conflicts and these articles demonstrated the daily shifts in foreign policy toward each conflict. Moreover, I used copious amounts of UN documents. In particular, I read every UN Security Council Resolution passed for each peacekeeping mission and briefs sent to the Secretary General. Through these sources I was able to obtain the opinions and relevant preoccupations of both the Council and the Secretary General.

            Although my research endeavor was very fruitful, I was not devoid of failed attempts. My first few searches were defined by their failure. I began searching under the term “UN Intervention” which I assumed was the accurate term for any UN peacekeeping mission or international criminal tribunal. After finding one literary source that covered the UN peacekeeping missions in particular I found that those sources tended to be more specific to each country and also covered the other initiatives such as the international tribunal communal of the ad hoc commissions. In addition, I used a fair amount of controlled vocabulary and Boolean searches such as ((and)) or ((or)) or ((+)) to specify my search and make the results more myopic in scope.

            Naturally, when I began using the proper sources and the correct search terms, I was confronted with a large amount of source material and I had to evaluate my sources accordingly. Relevance was the primary variable that allowed me to quickly dismiss sources—if articles were too short and provided a quick glace over the material I decided it was best to avoid them. Journal articles were much easier to evaluate because they tend to be rigorously peer-reviewed, the only consideration outside of peer-reviewed articles was the amount that they were cited by other sources. Fortunately, early on in my research I realized that many of my most utilized sources were quoting each other, which added to their validity but also pushed me to consider other options in other mediums—such as newspapers etc. International journals were also very important because one of my central variables was the US influence—I assumed that the articles from the US would be biased,leading me to other source materials in other languages etc. Moreover, sources that were printed before the respective civil wars or too soon after were disregarded as they were either irrelevant or did not incorporate variables that were important. For example, I tended to not use sources before the end of the civil war or sources that were written before an initiatives took place.

            My resource materials allowed me to explore a complex situation with a wide range of sources limiting the amount of bias. Moreover, Rwanda and El Salvador have never been studied in one document comparing and contrasting their differences. As such, my work produces a fairly new take on two countries that had not previously been analyzed simultaneously.