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978-1-107-09496-3 - Reconstructing Atrocity Prevention

Edited by Sheri P. Rosenberg, Tibi Galis and Alex Zucker

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Reconstructing Atrocity Prevention

In the two and a half decades since the end of the Cold War, policymakers have become acutely aware of the extent to which the world today faces mass atrocities. In an effort to prevent the death, destruction, and global chaos wrought by these crimes, the agendas for both national and international policy have grown beyond conflict prevention to encompass atrocity prevention, protection of civilians, transitional justice, and the Responsibility to Protect. Yet, to date, there has been no attempt to address the topic of the prevention of mass atrocities from the theoretical, policy, and practicing standpoints simultaneously. This volume is designed to fill that gap, clarifying and solidifying the present understanding of atrocity prevention. It will serve as an authoritative work on the state of the field.

SHERI P. ROSENBERG (1967–2015) was a scholar, professor, and human rights advocate focusing on issues of law and mass atrocity. She was Associate Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Cardozo Law Institute on Holocaust and Human Rights (CLIHHR) and the Human Rights and Atrocity Prevention Clinic. Her publications include “Genocide by Attrition: Efficient and Silent,” in *Genocide Matters* (2013) and “Responsibility to Protect: A Framework for Prevention” in the journal *Global Responsibility to Protect* (2009).

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In memory of Sheri Rosenberg, scholar, colleague, mentor, friend. Sheri dedicated her life to the prevention of mass atrocities and to helping the people affected by them. Her knowledge, passion, and humor were an inspiration to us all, and her vision lives on in this volume.

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Foreword

Roméo Dallaire

Retired generals rarely write prefaces to nonmilitary books, but this is a rare book on a topic of crucial importance. The United Nations provided me with no serious briefing, scholarly or journalistic, before posting me to Rwanda in 1993. Major Brent Beardsley, my excellent assistant, scoured libraries and bookstores before our departure and put together a few basic facts. Only when we reached Kigali was he even able to purchase at a local shop a map of the city of Kigali and our areas of immediate responsibility. Such cavalier attitudes toward the needs of peacebuilding staff members permeated the UN system in the early 1990s, but, as later developments in Rwanda made clear, the success of UN peace operations requires rigorous and early input from experienced scholars and practitioners.

When “spoilers” undermined implementation of the Arusha Accords and the Rwanda genocide against Tutsi unfolded in spring 1994, most member states, especially those with seats on the UN Security Council, retreated to the narrowest notions of their core self-interests and mustered no comprehensive vision of genocide prevention or any recognition that protecting civilian lives was a vital responsibility of national leaders and the UN system itself. Neither the provisions of the UN Genocide Convention nor the concept of “human security” sufficed to mobilize states against mass atrocities aimed at destroying an entire human group. Only the desperate postgenocide discovery of sovereignty as responsibility, a concept pioneered by Francis Deng with Roberta Cohen at the Brookings Institution,¹ lit the way toward concrete implementation of the concept of “Never Again,” a legacy of the Holocaust and World War II that, until the late 1990s, was honored rhetorically, but never in practice.

As a Canadian, I am proud that farsighted leaders and public servants such as Lloyd Axworthy and Don Hubert spearheaded the campaign to create the

¹ See Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, “Normative Framework of Sovereignty,” in Francis M. Deng, Sadikiel Kimaro, Terrence Lyons, Donald Rothchild, and I. William Zartman (eds.), *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996), 1–33.

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International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), whose December 2001 report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, embodies the enduring ideas discussed in this volume. But I am also forced to admit that theirs was a minority effort within the government of Canada and that we would not be discussing the responsibility to protect (R2P) today were it not for the commitment and intellectual energy of Gareth Evans, the formidable foreign minister of Australia from 1988 to 1996 and president of the International Crisis Group from 2000 to 2009.

Why had no concrete mechanism and guidelines for preventing genocide emerged before Kosovo in 1999 and R2P in 2001? As Frank Chalk and my colleagues at Concordia University's Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies found in their interview-based comparative research, in the wake of the Rwanda genocide, "the United States' experience with Milosevic's brutal record in the Balkans, and its perceived national interest in securing Europe" played major roles.² Unlike the Rwandan crisis, "the geopolitical importance of the Balkans to the U.S. and its NATO allies constituted a powerful impetus for action against Milosevic."³ The Racak massacre of forty Kosovar Albanians in January 1999 and the failure of the Rambouillet Peace Talks in February of that year compelled President Clinton to explore the military option.⁴ Chalk and our team concluded in their 2009 study that "Ultimately, the NATO intervention was motivated by a confluence of narrowly perceived U.S. national interests, moral imperative, and the desire to demonstrate NATO's continued military prowess and prestige."⁵

In the aftermath of Kosovo, a strong consensus on what governments should do to organize themselves to prevent future mass atrocities emerged. It is crystallized in *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene: Leadership to Prevent Mass Atrocities*, the book I co-authored with Chalk, Kyle Matthews, and others in 2010, and in *Preventing Genocide: A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers* (2008), an important study piloted by Madeleine K. Albright and William S. Cohen.⁶ Enabling leadership, enhancing coordination, building capacity, and ensuring knowledge are the central tasks. That means presidents and prime ministers who make preventing mass atrocities a national priority for their governments

² Romeo Dallaire, Frank Chalk, Kyle Matthews, Carla Barqueiro, and Simon Doyle, *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene: Leadership and Action to Prevent Mass Atrocities* (Montreal: Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, Concordia University, 2009), 105. A book version of this study is available as *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene: Leadership to Prevent Mass Atrocities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). Page numbers referred to in this Preface refer to the 2009 version, cited above.

³ Ibid., 106.

⁴ Ibid., 106 and 108.

⁵ Ibid., 109.

⁶ Madeleine K. Albright and William S. Cohen, eds. *Preventing Genocide: A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, American Academy of Diplomacy, and the Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace, 2008).

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and appoint a focal point person to lead the genocide prevention agenda across the government. It means permanent legislative committees to serve as watchdogs ensuring that the executive branch of government is given the necessary resources and follows through on its commitment. It also means overcoming the tendency to seal off vital intelligence on looming mass atrocities by creating an atrocities prevention board to share information across the government, galvanize diplomacy, craft carefully targeted foreign aid, and, if necessary, deploy military resources in mass atrocity response operations. And, finally, it means civil society groups and media focused on mass atrocity prevention and implementing “the responsibility to report.”⁷

Most political leaders still don’t understand that their nation’s self-interest is tied to preventing mass atrocities against other human beings, especially while they are haunted and intimidated by the specters of Iraq and Afghanistan at election time. President Obama’s Atrocity Prevention Board is a very important step in the right direction, but even it, in practice, is not yet the dynamo needed to energize the U.S. government’s prevention efforts. Interests and perceptions matter, and it may take disasters like the Ebola epidemic and its worldwide ramifications for public health to highlight for political leaders the indirect connections between atrocity prevention in faraway lands and the national security of their citizens. Dr. Jay Keystone, head of the Tropical Disease Unit at the Toronto General Hospital, tied these threads together in our 2009 study, when he wrote: “Preventing genocide and crimes against humanity are front line tasks in our fight to maintain public health security right here in North America. Our politicians and public health officials need to lead in this area.”⁸

I like this book. I like the editors’ recognition that we still have a lot to learn and that it will take a truly interdisciplinary approach to learn it. I like their focus on viewing prevention through the lenses of theory, policy, and practice. And I like the fact that it is a book written with students, our future preventers, in mind. The greatest challenge we will face is to convince political leaders to wisely use the insights and recommendations developed by these authors. And that will not be easy when we consider the hurdles they face, even those with the best will in the world. As political scientist René Lemarchand recently wrote: “we need to remind ourselves that it is in states where poverty is rife, political institutions are failing and human rights are abused that we should expect the greatest amount of turmoil.”⁹ But no one ever said the job would be easy!

⁷ *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene*, 17–63.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ René Lemarchand, “The Arc of Instability in Africa,” unpublished paper, July 2014, 9–10.

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I believe that priority should be given to a carrot-and-stick approach, encouraging and harnessing a broader idea of national self-interest to counter political leaders' fears about backlashes after intervention and the costs to their states of foregoing the lures of profits earned from arms sales and resource control. One useful approach is for international institutions like the World Bank, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the UN to provide compensation to the smaller nations for the direct and indirect costs of prevention and to recognize more vigorously the sacrifices that taxpayers in wealthier countries make when their leaders undertake peace diplomacy. Once national leaders grasp the practical importance of R2P, renewing their commitment to financing growing expertise that improves operational understanding of other cultures, languages, and histories is the next crucial step. The convergence of national interests and mass atrocity prevention will one day be obvious to all, but we have a long way to go – the transition from noble words to practical action is essential.

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