



Passing the BATON

*Foreign Policy Challenges and
Opportunities Facing the New Administration*

Session Four: “Preventing Genocide: A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers”

Speakers: **Madeleine K. Albright**, Former Secretary of State;
General Anthony C. Zinni (USMC, ret.), former Commander in Chief, U.S.
Central Command

Main Issues

Despite past efforts, the international community still remains ineffective in its attempts to prevent and halt the occurrence of mass atrocities and genocide. The establishment of the Genocide Prevention Task Force (GPTF) reflected a shared interest among its convening institutions—the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the U.S. Institute of Peace—to build a practical framework that could help the U.S. government better respond to threats of genocide and mass atrocities. Secretary Albright and General Zinni discussed the Task Force’s “blueprint for action,” which outlines a comprehensive strategy emphasizing the role of leadership and the need for effective early warning, early prevention, preventive diplomacy, military options, and international action.

Apart from the moral obligation to act against these crimes and the threat they pose to core American values – such as democracy and the basic human right to life – genocide and mass atrocities also threaten U.S. national interests. Genocides may further destabilize weak regimes, thereby increasing the potential for terrorist recruitment, human trafficking, civil strife, and refugee flows. Such security risks have spill over effects and require investments with a cost far exceeding that of early prevention. Prevention is thus a lot less costly in blood and treasure than dealing with crisis situations reactively.

In her address, Secretary Albright said the central premise of the GPTF report is that genocide is unacceptable and that we can and should do more to prevent it. While the United States does not bear this burden alone, it does have a profound duty and a capability to do more.

Albright spoke about four imperatives for genocide prevention, beginning with American leadership. Preventing genocide and mass atrocities, she said, should be a top foreign policy priority of the new administration and should be part of the job description of every foreign policy professional.

Albright’s second imperative is funding. The task force proposed an additional annual U.S. appropriation of \$250 million for targeted prevention efforts. This is a modest investment, but could have a significant impact.



Passing the BATON

*Foreign Policy Challenges and
Opportunities Facing the New Administration*

Her third imperative is preparation. The new administration will find many places where the “kindling” for genocide or mass atrocities exists and a spark could trigger a conflagration. The U.S. therefore needs to be prepared to respond quickly with robust diplomacy and flexible military options.

The fourth imperative is to fully integrate crisis prevention into national security decision-making. This will require asking key questions that early and rigorously test critical assumptions. The United States must beware unintended consequences and keep options open.

In his comments, General Zinni described the challenges he faced in Operation Provide Comfort, which was tasked with the protection of hundreds of thousands of Kurds living in brutal conditions and at risk of mass violence from Saddam Hussein’s regime. This experience underscored for him the need to further develop strategies and tactics for preventing mass atrocities against civilian populations.

Zinni said it is vital to integrate American soft power with the hard power of its military. On the military side, the task force urged the Defense Department to think more deeply about the specific strategies, tactics, and procedures necessary for the prevention of mass atrocities. He said the United States has not done enough to build the capacities of regional organizations like the African Union to effectively prevent and halt mass atrocities. It is much wiser to empower local actors that are willing to deploy their troops early in an atrocity than for the United States to wring its hands about the deployment of its troops later. Along with security assistance programs, the U.S. should help build local and regional capacity for effective diplomatic and political action, Zinni said.

Policy Conclusions*

1. The President should demonstrate that preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a top national priority.
2. Congress should appropriate increased and more flexible funding for crisis prevention projects tailored to reduce risks of genocide.
3. The administration must prepare itself for potential genocidal crises.
 - a. The Defense Department should develop guidance on how U.S. military assets can be used to prevent and halt mass atrocities.

* Policy Conclusions from Group Panel Discussions at Passing the Baton 2009 were not necessarily achieved by group consensus. In some instances, individual panel members may have been in disagreement with the larger group. For specific information on each panel’s contents, please see the comprehensive online archive at www.usip.org/baton2009.



Passing the BATON

*Foreign Policy Challenges and
Opportunities Facing the New Administration*

4. Crisis prevention should be fully integrated into national security decision making.
 - a. Both hard and soft power should be marshalled for genocide prevention strategies.
5. The U.S. should enhance programs to build capacity of local and regional partners to prevent and respond to genocide and mass atrocities.