



CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP: The Indispensable Ingredient

In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skilful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.

—PRESIDENT HARRY S TRUMAN

Nothing is more central to preventing genocide than leadership—from the president, Congress, and the American people. In subsequent chapters of this report we propose numerous specific ideas that we believe will enhance U.S. government capacity to prevent genocide. But none of these will be realized without the best kind of American leadership: farsighted, energetic, and optimistic, eschewing partisanship to rally our government and our people to a great calling.

Our focus on leadership emanates from three major themes that emerged from the Genocide Prevention Task Force’s research and consultations:

- 1. Interest and attention from the highest ranks of the U.S. government have been crucial to most past successful prevention efforts. But high-level attention is extremely difficult to mobilize and sustain because of competing priorities and a pervasive, crisis-driven, reactive culture.*

Attention from the president and his or her close group of senior advisors is the most prized commodity in Washington policy circles. When high-level officials are actively engaged, progress is usually possible. Our research and our personal experience have shown this to be true for genocide prevention. The attention of individual officials and personal relationships are major parts of virtually all reported success stories. This fact encourages us about the prospects for progress, given a serious commitment from the incoming president and national security advisor. At the same time, however, it vexes us that our government has left preventing genocide to the vagaries of personality and chance.

High-level attention has been most common when policymakers have been sensitized by recent past atrocities and when threats have emerged in regions of geopolitical importance. In early 2008, for example, the personal intervention of the secretary of state reportedly was instrumental in tamping down the post-electoral violence in Kenya, a linchpin country in East Africa. In the late 1990s, high-level U.S. officials recognized Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's escalating repression of Kosovar Albanians following his war crimes in Bosnia and took resolute action with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partners when he proved recalcitrant. Likewise, in the aftermath of the mass killing in Rwanda in 1994, U.S. officials became deeply concerned about the possibility that mass killing could be unleashed in neighboring Burundi. The national security advisor worked with the assistant secretary of state for African affairs, the U.S. ambassador, and others in the international community to bolster peacemaking efforts in Burundi, with relative success.

The obvious problem is that one cannot rely on high-level attention, particularly if one believes, as we do, that action before or at an early stage of a crisis holds the greatest promise. The demands on senior U.S. national security figures are enormously taxing and constantly expanding in scope and complexity. We know firsthand, for example, that the attention of senior policymakers was distracted from Rwanda in 1994 by other crises unfolding at the same time in Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti. Furthermore, most cases of genocide or mass atrocities occur in places that have been in a state of semi-permanent, low-level crisis over years. If it is difficult to get one meeting with the national security advisor to discuss an escalating genocidal crisis where our other interests are not implicated, what can be done when a crisis bubbles near but just short of catastrophe for months on end?

The answer must lie in a combination of creating systems to institutionalize effective early responses at the working level and demonstrating presidential priority to facilitate high-level attention when necessary.

2. U.S. policy responses to perceived threats of genocide or mass atrocities have typically been ad hoc, lacking an overarching policy framework, a standing interagency process for devising and implementing preventive strategies, and significant dedicated institutional capacity.

Simply put, the U.S. government does not have an established, coherent policy for preventing and responding to genocide and mass atrocities. The manner in which the United States has generally handled the emergence of genocidal crises reflects the lack of priority placed on these issues. Admirable individuals have at various times tried to cobble together effective responses in the face of bureaucratic indifference (or resistance) and political obstacles. Some of these efforts made temporary progress in strengthening U.S. policy efforts, only to dissipate when attention turned elsewhere. In addition, well-intentioned U.S. officials too often have repeated the mistakes of the past because there have been neither reliable, long-standing institutional structures nor systematic efforts to draw lessons from both success and failure.

The lack of a policy framework is particularly problematic. The fact that genocide has largely been an invisible issue in the U.S. government bureaucracy has made it difficult to get critical information about grave risks of genocide or mass atrocities to key decision makers before a crisis has become full blown. Absent demonstrable high-level priority or a strategic framework, it is too easy to dismiss warnings as alarmist and to marginalize the few specialists in the government. The lack of overarching policy gives the advantage to individuals or parts of the U.S. government that prefer to avoid involvement in genocide prevention efforts, for whatever reason. It takes little to disrupt a process, slow it down, or place obstacles in its way if there is no policy framework to provide guidance and promote accountability.

Preventing genocide appears to be a responsibility held simultaneously by no one and everyone in the U.S. foreign policy apparatus. It can be argued that every U.S. diplomat, development professional, and military officer is

helping reduce the risk of mass atrocities by doing his or her normal work. Yet virtually no one identifies preventing genocide as an explicit or main-stream objective.

The task force does not measure effectiveness by looking to the size of an office or the size of a budget. Cognizant of the marginalization of most “functional” bureaus and the sidelining of “special initiatives,” we support integrating attention to prevention of genocide into broader foreign policy-making functions and structures. Nevertheless, the lack of appreciable dedicated capacity is, by any measure, problematic.

The State Department Office of War Crimes Issues (S/WCI) is the closest the U.S. government has to a home for focused attention to atrocities prevention. The office was created in 1997 to advise the secretary of state on U.S. efforts to address serious violations of international humanitarian law committed anywhere in the world. But only a small proportion of the staff’s time—perhaps as little as 10 percent—is dedicated to monitoring risks, planning for contingencies, engaging in preventive diplomacy, or coordinating preventive actions. Most of its resources go toward supporting international criminal tribunals and managing legal issues related to U.S.-held detainees. These are important matters, but should not detract from our government’s efforts to prevent mass atrocities.

Like most current high-priority foreign policy concerns, preventing genocide requires a whole-of-government approach that leverages all relevant sources of national power and influence. One pattern that has limited the effectiveness of U.S. responses to threats of genocide or mass atrocities has been the strong tendency to think and act within bureaucratic silos. The lack of regular attention in the interagency process has led to uncoordinated efforts that have too often failed.

3. U.S. officials recognize the importance of partnerships with other actors—including other governments, the United Nations, regional and subregional bodies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based groups, and the private sector—but there is little understanding of the capacities of these prospective partners and of the options for concerted action.

From the outset, this task force was unanimous in its conviction that the United States should seek to work with other actors in the international

community to prevent genocide. The United States will continue to have great influence in the world, particularly relative to other individual states. But the U.S. government may not always be the most influential actor and may not always have enough influence by itself to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. In many cases, the influence of neighboring states, regional powers, and patron states will outweigh that of the United States. Building anti-genocide partnerships is a practical necessity.

It is also a real possibility. There are few things that garner as much global consensus as averting the horror of genocide and mass atrocities. In the six decades since the adoption of the Genocide Convention by the UN General Assembly, 140 states representing almost 90 percent of the world's population have joined the treaty. At the World Summit in 2005, every government in the world accepted "the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" and affirmed that the "international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility ... to help protect populations" from these crimes. World leaders also resolved "to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council ... should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations" from these crimes. The breadth of global consensus is critical because mass atrocities do not restrict themselves to any region of the world. It represents a strong foundation for intergovernmental cooperation to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. (We discuss international norms and institutions further in Chapter 6.)

In addition to governments and intergovernmental organizations, civil society is a key partner, the breadth of which extends from major international NGOs working in human rights advocacy, humanitarian assistance, and development to local groups in high-risk communities, such as religious organizations, women's groups, and trade organizations. Civil society actors worldwide have pushed their governments to build institutions to match their stated commitments to the responsibility to protect, and to ensure accountability for past atrocities.

The diversity of potential partners poses a challenge to match its opportunity: How can the U.S. government most effectively work in partnership with other actors to prevent genocide and mass atrocities? The structures and processes that work well in cooperating with states are not likely to

work as well with grassroots NGOs. Meanwhile, existing multilateral structures, such as the UN Security Council, have proven to be difficult if indispensable vehicles for leveraging effective strategies to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. We must look for ways to invigorate existing mechanisms for working in partnership, and find new, flexible mechanisms suited for this mission.

To the President

Recommendation 1-1: The president should demonstrate that preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a national priority.

This could be accomplished through a strong statement in the president's inaugural address, an early executive order, and continuing public statements, such as emphasis in successive State of the Union addresses. There are numerous examples of incoming presidents using these means to signal increased priority to an issue. Perhaps most illustrative for our purposes was President Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights. He spoke frequently about human rights on the campaign trail, made it a major theme of his inaugural address, and emphasized its centrality to U.S. foreign policy in a speech that marked the 30th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 1978.

Clear presidential priority is the single most reliable way of enhancing attention to an issue throughout the U.S. government. We heard from current officials, for example, that President George W. Bush's pledge of "not on my watch," which he reportedly made on the margins of a memo recounting U.S. inaction in 1994 Rwanda, made a difference in bureaucratic debates about U.S. action in Darfur. As this case has shown, presidential attention is no panacea. But it sets a tone that challenges those who favor business as usual and can tilt the debate in positive ways.

We are keenly aware that the incoming president's agenda will be overfull from day one. Preventing genocide and mass atrocities need not be seen as an add-on to the core foreign policy domain. The means and ends of genocide prevention dovetail with other U.S. priorities, providing a rare and important opportunity for progress.

Recommendation 1-2: Under presidential leadership, the administration should develop and promulgate a government-wide policy on preventing genocide and mass atrocities.

The most recent official policy statement in this area comes from the 2006 National Security Strategy, which states:

We must refine United States Government efforts—economic, diplomatic, and law-enforcement—so that they target those individuals responsible for genocide and not the innocent citizens they rule. Where perpetrators of mass killing defy all attempts at peaceful intervention, armed intervention may be required, preferably by the forces of several nations working together under appropriate regional or international auspices.

This is a good foundation. We believe the next National Security Strategy should go further, and should state explicitly that the prevention of genocide is in U.S. interests and that all appropriate agencies of the U.S. government should plan and be prepared to act to support this objective.

While the National Security Strategy sets the broad framework for U.S. foreign policy, it stops short of articulating policy at the operational level. The Department of State and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Strategic Plan and the National Defense Strategy translate the National Security Strategy into high-level strategy for the key executive agencies. But the best vehicle for developing and promulgating a government-wide policy is a presidential directive—a national security presidential directive (NSPD) in the George W. Bush administration’s terminology, a presidential decision directive in the Clinton administration’s. A presidential directive would be valuable, first, in requiring senior officials from all relevant executive agencies to participate in a process of inter-agency policy development. The end product should combine a clear, agreed-upon statement of policy with operational guidance for specific situations. It would also trigger follow-on work to fill out important details of policy implementation. We believe a directive on preventing genocide and mass atrocities should encompass many of the specific recommendations offered in this report as a set of mutually reinforcing initiatives.

A recent example of how a presidential directive can serve as an instrument for government-wide policy development is National Security Presidential

Directive-44, “Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization.” NSPD-44 starts with a clear statement of policy, assigns responsibilities to the State Department and other executive agencies, and establishes a new National Security Council (NSC) committee for interagency policy coordination. This committee has since taken action to implement specific aspects of the overarching policy.

Recommendation 1-3: The president should create a standing interagency mechanism for analysis of threats of genocide and mass atrocities and consideration of appropriate preventive action.

A central component of a government-wide policy should be a new institutional mechanism that can effectively coordinate action across agencies, directed from the White House and co-chaired by senior officials from the NSC and State Department. Specifically, we propose creating an Atrocities Prevention Committee (APC) with direct links to the national security advisor and, by extension, to the president. The APC would comprise, at a minimum, representatives from State—including regional bureaus; the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL); S/WCI; and the Bureau of International Organization Affairs—Defense (including the Joint Chiefs of Staff), the intelligence community, the Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury, and USAID, all at the level of assistant secretary. It would convene every other month to discuss the latest risk assessment and warning analysis, or at any other time one of its members requested an emergency meeting. In the latter circumstance, a member would have the option to seek the emergency meeting at the level of deputy national security advisor or deputy secretary, making it, in effect, a meeting of the NSC Deputies Committee.

As Chapter 4 describes in greater detail, the APC would review the status of countries of concern according to the best available analysis and develop prevention and response plans, facilitating decisions at the NSC Deputies Committee and Principals Committee levels as necessary. The APC’s work would be supported and coordinated by a newly created NSC directorate for crisis prevention and response. This directorate would be appropriately staffed and resourced to direct and coordinate U.S. government action across a broad range of instability and humanitarian emergencies, not solely genocide and mass atrocities. Situating the APC in this context would

give the committee dedicated, specialized capacity while integrating its work into mainstream priorities.

The temptation when addressing specific concerns is to create a specific set of responses, such as a special coordinator with a single, stand-alone office. However, as similar initiatives have demonstrated, the end result is typically bureaucratic marginalization if not outright irrelevance. By embedding genocide prevention initiatives into a larger functional imperative—namely, crisis prevention and response—the likelihood that the United States would be prepared, able, and, moreover, willing to respond in the future would be significantly enhanced.

While an effective NSC structure is critical for interagency coordination and providing a link to the White House, effective organization within the State Department is equally important, given how deeply State is involved in virtually all U.S. efforts to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. We recommend that the secretary designate the assistant secretary for democracy, human rights, and labor as the single point of responsibility for coordinating genocide prevention efforts with others in the department, particularly the regional bureaus. Genocide is, fundamentally, a human rights issue, and DRL's broad mandate should help the assistant secretary mobilize preventive actions at an early stage, long before mass atrocities are imminent. To be effective as a senior point person for State, the assistant secretary must command respect throughout the department and abroad, with demonstrable ability to take policy disputes directly to the secretary. The staff and resources of DRL should be supplemented to match the additional responsibilities of coordination within State and outreach abroad to mobilize support for preventive action. Together with the NSC director for crisis prevention and response—or an equivalent senior NSC official, if that position is not created—the assistant secretary should co-chair the APC.

Recommendation 1-4: The president should launch a major diplomatic initiative to strengthen global efforts to prevent genocide and mass atrocities.

Personal diplomacy by the president is especially influential with other heads of state. The president should make genocide prevention a key theme

in U.S. diplomacy, with a major initiative designed to strengthen international efforts in this area and willingness to engage personally in particular crisis situations. This kind of presidential diplomacy would also serve broader U.S. interests by providing a platform for U.S. global engagement where there is a broad comity of interests.

The president should emphasize that the early and energetic engagement of the international community is likely to be the most effective way to defuse crises threatening to lead to genocide or mass atrocities. He should deliver this message directly to the United Nations in his first speech to the General Assembly. The president should call on other world leaders to join him in similar declarations at the Group of Eight (G-8) summit, at regional summits, and in bilateral meetings with other heads of state. These statements should be accompanied by tangible actions, such as support for an international network (see Recommendation 6-1) and other actions described elsewhere in this report, to demonstrate U.S. commitment to these principles. As an element of this expression of resolve, the United States should also reaffirm its support for the principle of the “responsibility to protect.”

To the Leaders of Congress

The tenacity of members of Congress, individually as well as through the committee structure and the Human Rights Caucus, has been a prime catalyst for human rights and genocide awareness in the U.S. government and beyond. Their role cannot be overstated. Working on a bipartisan basis, members of Congress have helped expose acts of genocide and related abuses and spurred the executive branch to more vigorous action. There are dozens of legislators who have been active on these issues over the years, frequently serving as the moral voices and most effective communicators in these efforts. We encourage members to stay engaged and continue to exercise their leadership role as a co-equal branch of government. We offer recommendations to congressional leaders below, designed to leverage their unique role in our government, enhance their own influence, and promote productive executive-legislative interaction.

Recommendation 1-5: Congress should increase funding for crisis prevention and response initiatives, and should make a portion of these funds available for rapid allocation for urgent activities to prevent or halt emerging genocidal crises.

Current U.S. government funding mechanisms work against the mounting of robust, coherent, and timely preventive strategies in two ways. First, the overall amount of money devoted to prevention-oriented activities is insufficient; if increasing early investment leads to prevention of even one crisis, it will have generated a healthy return in dollars and lives. Second, it is extremely difficult for executive agencies to mobilize even small amounts of money quickly to head off an emerging crisis. Mass atrocities do not follow U.S. government budget cycles, and an executive agency's budget allocation in any given month might have been planned almost two years prior. Responding quickly and effectively to unforeseen crises requires a better way to allocate a portion of U.S. government resources.

We propose that Congress appropriate an additional \$250 million annually to the international affairs budget to finance initiatives to prevent genocide and mass atrocities in countries at risk. This additional investment—less than a dollar for every American each year—would not only support valuable individual projects, but also provide focus for foreign policy professionals engaged in high-risk countries.

The bulk of the funds should be channeled into a new \$200 million genocide prevention initiative, to be funded through an expansion of resources in existing foreign assistance accounts (see Chapter 3). These funds would boost critical atrocities prevention efforts in high-risk environments identified and prioritized through enhanced early warning and interagency coordination mechanisms. The additional \$50 million should be reserved for rapid allocation to support urgent off-cycle projects. If Congress chooses to provide the State Department with funds for rapid allocation through a conflict response fund, as the George W. Bush administration has proposed, it should ensure that the scope of the new account includes funding focused on preventing genocide. Otherwise, this money could be a stand-alone fund for urgent response to genocidal crises. Another option would be for authorizing committees to amend Section 451 of the Foreign Assistance Act, which enables the president to reprogram up to \$25 million per year for unforeseen contingencies, boosting the cap and explicitly authorizing use of the money to respond to genocidal crises.

There is a variety of programs one could imagine such a fund being used for. These include support for diplomatic initiatives by regional or nongovernmental actors, targeted stabilization projects (for example, emergency assistance to local security forces), urgent military assistance to multilateral peace operations, direct nonmilitary intervention (jamming radios, cell phones), and inducements to influential leaders.

Allocation of off-cycle funds should require a formal presidential certification that strict criteria for emergency use have been satisfied, as well as official congressional notification. Administration officials should consult informally with leaders on Capitol Hill any time they are considering allocation of resources from this fund. Strong congressional oversight is not only crucial to garnering support for this proposal, but would also promote constructive executive-legislative partnership in preventing genocide and mass atrocities. We note that there are precedents for this type of fund at the State Department, including the Emergency Refugee and Migration Fund and the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Fund.

Fully half of this task force served as members of Congress. We know that lawmakers tend to resist proposals that give the executive branch more autonomy in allocating congressionally appropriated funds. We share these instincts. We also recognize that there are similar proposals on the table for broader purposes—for example, aiding states in transition. Yet we are faced with a serious challenge and a potential solution. We believe adequate procedural safeguards can be adopted to satisfy concerns on Capitol Hill. No future U.S. official should be forced to watch escalating atrocities knowing that our government could respond more effectively if only it could free up a small amount of money.

Recommendation 1-6: The newly established Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission should make preventing genocide and mass atrocities a central focus of its work.

The Congressional Human Rights Caucus has long been a mechanism for raising awareness and promoting action on a broad range of human rights issues. As a caucus, however, it did not have a steady stream of resources and depended almost entirely on its leadership for direction and support.

We welcome recent action by the House of Representatives to convert the caucus into a more permanent body, with more secure funding and stronger connection to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Fittingly, the House named this new body the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, in honor of the long-time leader of the Human Rights Caucus who passed away in 2008.

The commission's mandate is to "promote and advocate ... internationally recognized human rights norms as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments." Genocide and mass atrocities represent the most egregious of all human rights violations. The Genocide Convention was, in fact, the first modern human rights treaty, adopted a day before the Universal Declaration. As a core human rights issue, responding to threats of genocide should be an integral part of the Lantos Commission's work. The commission should spotlight and monitor emerging threats of genocide and mass atrocities and act as a vehicle for members of Congress to become informed about these threats and raise awareness about situations that may not be covered by the existing committee structure. While the commission is a body of the House, we encourage members of the Senate to cooperate closely with it. We also encourage the commission to cooperate with non-governmental groups and other partners engaged in documenting early warning signs of genocide and mass atrocities.

The Lantos Commission can play an important role in coordinating efforts by the committees and subcommittees that have oversight authority related to preventing genocide and mass atrocities, but it cannot substitute for appropriate committee action. Not surprisingly, numerous committees share oversight responsibility for executive action related to preventing genocide and mass atrocities (for example, foreign affairs/relations, armed services, intelligence, judiciary). To ensure that this issue does not fall through the cracks, all regional subcommittees of the House and Senate foreign affairs and foreign relations committees should add the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities to the terms of their jurisdictions, which are issued with each new Congress.

Recommendation 1-7: Congressional leaders should request that the director of national intelligence (DNI) include risk of genocide and mass atrocities in his or her annual testimony to Congress on threats to U.S. national security.

There are multiple benefits of this idea. First, it would raise the priority given to genocide and mass atrocities in the intelligence community by virtue of the need to prepare the DNI to brief and respond to questioning by members of Congress. Second, it would promote stronger executive-legislative interaction on these issues, one of the task force's overarching objectives. The DNI gives his or her annual testimony before the House and Senate select committees on intelligence and the House and Senate armed services committees. These and other committees, or their subcommittees, are then in a position to call on administration policymakers to discuss specific country situations in depth. Third, public testimony by the most senior U.S. intelligence official is likely to be valuable to NGOs seeking to raise public attention and mobilize support for more vigorous preventive action in various venues. The intelligence related to genocide warning is rarely highly classified; a public hearing would be appropriate.

To the American People

Recommendation 1-8: The American people should build a permanent constituency for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities.

The striking level of public engagement in the Darfur crisis suggests enormous untapped potential for genocide prevention in nongovernmental and civil society organizations around the world. In the United States, the grassroots activism mobilized in recent years represents a remarkably wide and diverse alliance of citizen groups—left and right, religious and secular, urban and rural, young and old, from all races and backgrounds—coming together in the shared belief that we as Americans can do more to halt needless massacres of innocents.

In today's age of electronic media communications, Americans are increasingly confronted in their living rooms—and even on their cell phones—with information about and images of death and destruction virtually anywhere they occur. This instantaneous media communication has already

been shown to sensitize Americans to the suffering of people in all corners of the globe. The Internet has proven to be a powerful tool for organizing broad-based responses to genocide and mass atrocities, as we have seen in response to the crisis in Darfur.

We urge the American people to continue to support more assertive government action in response to genocide and mass atrocities. We especially urge a greater focus on prevention and on encouraging U.S. government engagement at the earliest possible stage, before a crisis develops. The State Department, White House, and congressional leaders should work to develop outreach strategies and strong relationships with NGOs and citizen groups. Such relations can positively reinforce efforts to raise attention to and allocate resources for engagement in atrocities prevention.

