

Campaigning to Protect:

Using Military Force to Stop Genocide and Mass Atrocities

Intended Audience: *Senior policy makers and their staffs, Members of Congress and their staffs, military and foreign policy advisors, think tank members, and members of the media who specialize in defense and foreign policy.*

Purpose: *To present options for using military force to stop genocide and mass atrocities, and to propose a model for designing military campaigns in these situations.*

Description: *Policy makers need options for stopping mass atrocities—in the absence of viable options, political leaders can do little more than condemn the perpetrators. This paper presents military options in situations where atrocities are about to occur or are already occurring. While these options can be implemented individually if the situation dictates, they will generally be more effective if they are considered as building blocks in an overall campaign. The paper concludes by deriving a model for campaign design to counter acts of genocide.*

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government, the Department of Defense, or the US Air Force.

If Everyone is Against Genocide, Why Does the World Allow it to Occur?

It is safe to assume that most of the world's leaders are against genocide, at least in the abstract.¹ When faced with specific instances of genocide-like behavior, however, many of these leaders have chosen not to intervene. There are many reasons for this, and one is that states are simply acting in their best interest. Intervention—particularly military intervention—to stop mass atrocities involves significant cost, and interveners often incur great personal risk. The problem with stopping atrocities is that it can be difficult to describe, much less to quantify, the benefits for an intervening state. The best arguments are moral ones, but altruism is rarely decisive in international politics. Rational actors will usually choose against intervening when the perceived costs outweigh the benefits. This is why Samantha Power writes, “No U.S. president has ever made genocide prevention a priority, and no U.S. president has ever suffered politically for his indifference to its occurrence. It is thus no coincidence that genocide rages on.”²

There is more to the story, but it requires further analysis. Specifically, states are not organized well to intervene, and officials within the state structure lack the influence and tools to argue effectively for intervention.³ Few, if any, governments have organizations and capabilities that are specifically designed for stopping atrocities. Given the lack of institutional expertise and standard operating procedures, states appear to be choosing logically when they decide against intervention. In addition, as various policy-makers engage in the push and pull of domestic politics, it is clear that the most influential players are advocating against intervention generally,

¹ In fact, many of them believe that if a situation is determined to be genocide, it implies a duty to intervene. Because the debate over “genocide” as a legal term is beyond the scope of this paper, the term “atrocities” is used from this point forward.

² Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), xxi.

³ This analysis is based on Graham Allison's three models—Rational Actor, Organizational Behavior, and Intergovernmental Politics—presented in the book *Essence of Decision*. Graham Allison and Phillip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999).

and military intervention specifically, much of the time. They are doing this for various reasons, including cost-benefit analysis (from their individual perspectives), fear of failure (strengthened by negative examples from recent history), and a lack of belief that intervention falls within their assigned mission. Those that argue for intervention lack the tools, including integrated concepts of operation and campaign plans, to convince their superiors. The result is that there have been few good policy options available for intervention, and this is a strong hindrance to action.

The forces that prevent intervention are self-reinforcing. States choose not to intervene because officials and organizations within their government do not produce workable options for intervention, and they fail to build appropriate capabilities and organizations for intervention because they typically choose not to intervene. Additionally, on the rare occasions when they do intervene, they tend to muddle through due to a lack of expertise. Sometimes, the intervention goes very badly and creates a strong disincentive for intervention in the future. This cycle is excruciating for those who want to stop mass atrocities.

Breaking the Cycle—Providing Options for Military Intervention

One way to break this cycle is to present better options for states that may want to intervene to stop mass atrocities. In the absence of viable options, political leaders can do little more than condemn the perpetrators. This paper presents military options in situations where atrocities may occur or are occurring. Each of these military options consists of a set of actions with a specific mechanism for success and distinct advantages and disadvantages. While these options can be implemented individually if the situation dictates, they will generally be more effective if they are considered as building blocks in an overall campaign. The paper concludes by proposing a method for incorporating these building blocks in a general model for military action to stop mass atrocities.

Prerequisites for Action

Before military options are initiated, certain prerequisites must be met. First, there must be *indications* that atrocities are imminent or are already occurring. Early intervention is probably the most effective course for preventing or halting atrocities, but it requires awareness. Second, although the possibility of unilateral intervention by a state cannot be ruled out, successful interventions are most likely to be conducted by a *coalition* of states.⁴ This could include interventions approved by the United Nations Security Council, but it may also include regional organizations or ad hoc coalitions. Additionally, coalitions will probably need the cooperation of non-governmental organizations to be successful. This means that the command structure for military forces will need to reflect the diversity of the coalition, and while the NGOs may choose not to formally participate in coalition planning, there should be some forum where information is shared for the common good. The coalition will have to agree upon a *mandate*—essentially a statement of mission—for the intervention. Ideally, this mandate would be clear and fixed. In reality, mandates have proven to be vague and changeable. Nevertheless, partner nations must take the time to think through the mandate, including the overall goals, limitations, and resources required for the intervention. In *The Responsibility to Protect*, the International Commission on International and State Sovereignty discusses the importance of thinking through the mandate. “Without such calculations from the outset a problem of mustering sufficient ‘political will’ to see the intervention through to a successful conclusion

⁴ In the case of interventions sponsored by the United Nations, the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations writes in its 2000 report, “The Panel recognizes that the United Nations does not wage war. Where enforcement action is required, it has consistently been entrusted to coalitions of willing States, with the authorization of the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter.” *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, 21 August 2000, 10. Available at http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/ (accessed 19 Feb 2008).

exists.”⁵ Finally, coalition partners must publish clear *rules of engagement* for their forces. The rules must address difficult questions such as allowances for self-defense, targeting, and escalation of force. These must be in place before forces are committed to intervention operations, and it is highly desired that all forces operate under the same rules. Failure to do so will create friction within the coalition and may lead to failure. With these prerequisites in place, military force can be a necessary, but probably not sufficient, feature of successful intervention.

What Can Military Force Accomplish?

Policy makers must realize that military force is only one part of a comprehensive solution for halting genocide. Any successful effort will probably require the threat of force or its actual use to deter or stop the violence, but this is not sufficient for addressing the root causes or achieving a lasting solution. In the short run, humanitarian efforts are often necessary to meet the populations’ basic needs. In the long run, diplomatic and economic efforts are needed to create and sustain momentum toward a lasting solution—one where the threat of atrocities eventually fades away.

If used properly, military force can provide a starting point toward a lasting solution by establishing an acceptable level of security. In cases of mass atrocities, military force can address the symptoms of violence, but it cannot alleviate the underlying causes (in fact, it can make things worse if used unwisely). The primary military objective is to stop the violence. The second is to maintain enough security to allow progress toward a lasting peace.

Applying a Cold Warrior’s Perspective on Force

As planners and policy makers design campaigns to achieve these two objectives, they must decide how they will apply military force. During the Cold War, influential theorist

⁵ *The Responsibility to Protect*, Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, December 2001, 60. Available at <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/> (accessed 19 Feb 2008).

Thomas C. Schelling argued that force can be used in two fundamental ways. Today, his argument applies to genocide intervention just as much as it does to conventional and nuclear war. In *Arms and Influence*, Schelling proposes that force can be used “forcibly,” i.e. it can bring harm to the enemy through actions such as killing people, demolishing equipment, destroying infrastructure, and damaging production capacity.⁶ If one has enough force, *the enemy has no choice in the matter*. He must accept the losses inflicted on him. Schelling called this category *brute force*.⁷ Alternatively, there is another, more subtle, way to apply force. Schelling describes this alternative...

In addition to seizing and holding, disarming and confining, penetrating and obstructing, and all that, military force can be used to hurt. In addition to taking and protecting things of value, it can destroy value. In addition to weakening an enemy, it can cause an enemy plain suffering.... To inflict suffering gains nothing and saves nothing directly; it can only make people behave to avoid it. The only purpose, unless sport or revenge, must be to influence somebody’s behavior, to coerce his decision or choice.... The power to hurt is bargaining power. To exploit it is diplomacy—vicious diplomacy, but diplomacy.⁸

Because military force has the power to hurt, it can *coerce*. In this case, *the adversary has a choice*. He can comply or suffer the consequences. These two categories of force—brute force and coercion—are at the essence of the military art. Most successful campaigns combine both the destructive and coercive power of force to achieve the objective.

Coercion and the Power to Hurt

If the objective is stopping atrocities, these broad categories can be expanded into a menu of options for applying force. Leveraging the coercive power of force—the power to hurt—can deter violence before it has started. If the violence has started, that same power can compel the

⁶ Schelling, Thomas C., *Arms and Influence* (Fredericksburg, Virginia: BookCrafters, 1966), 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*

perpetrators to stop. Schelling argues that deterrence is different, and generally easier, than compellence.

Deterrence involves setting the stage—by announcement, by rigging the trip-wire, by incurring the obligation—and *waiting*. The overt act is up to the opponent.... Compellence, in contrast, usually involves *initiating* an action (or an irrevocable commitment to action) that can cease, or become harmless, only if the opponent responds.⁹

Both deterrence and compellence have three requirements. First, the state or coalition making the threat must have the capability to carry out the threat. It does no good to threaten an act of force that cannot be executed. Second, the threat must be credible in the context of the situation. It is not useful to threaten nuclear strikes, for example, when trying to deter actors contemplating lesser offenses such as seizing territory in a border dispute. Alternatively, there are ways to increase the credibility of threats. Physical actions, for instance, can bolster the perception that a threat is likely to be followed through. For example, logistical movements and shows of force can bolster a threat. Third, the threat must be clearly communicated to the people who must either act or forego action. This clear communication must include the delivery of a specific message to the right audience. The message must include both the action required as well as the consequences for noncompliance. All three requirements are necessary when attempting to use force to coerce would-be perpetrators of atrocities.

Brute Force and the Power to Destroy

In addition to the use of force to coerce, brute force is applicable in cases of mass atrocities. There are two ways to employ brute force—defensively and offensively. Like deterrence, defense is somewhat passive. It usually involves taking a position and waiting for an opponent to initiate action. Alternatively, offense is usually active. It is characterized by the initiation of force against the opponent. Interestingly, military theorists have argued for

⁹ Ibid, 71-72.

centuries about the relative strength of defense and offense. Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz, for example, asserted that the defense was the stronger form of war, but it had the “negative purpose.”¹⁰ This negative purpose is a major reason why military professionals prefer offense. They naturally want to do something, not have something done to them. Despite a preference for offense, wise military officers understand that successful military campaigns combine elements of both offense and defense. An effective offense usually begins from a defended position, and a strong defense usually involves aspects of offense within the defensive framework.

Therefore, in the context of halting atrocities, there are four general possibilities for military force. First, if indications are that violence will start in the future, the threat of force can *deter* that violence from occurring. Second, if the violence has begun, the threat of force, or its actual use, can *compel* perpetrators to discontinue the violence. Third, if violence is ongoing, military force can *defend* the victims. Finally, military force can be used *offensively* to kill the perpetrators or destroy the resources, including equipment and infrastructure, needed to continue the violence. From these four general possibilities, intervening organizations can develop several specific military options for stopping mass atrocities. See Figure 1 for an illustration of these categories of force.

¹⁰ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 71.

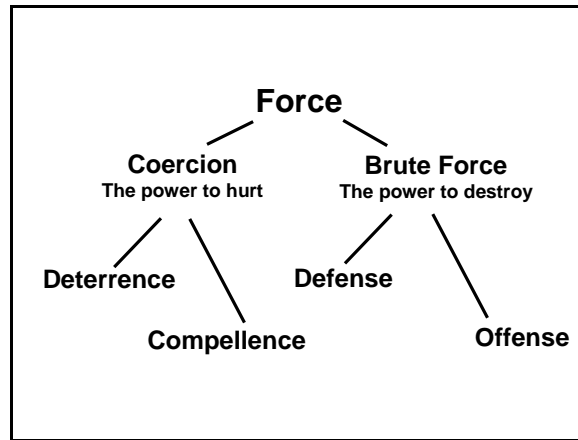


Figure 1: Schelling's Categories of Force.

Options for Military Intervention to Stop Mass Atrocities

The following options arise from the previous discussion on military force. In a situation involving threats or actual acts of atrocities, these military options are available to those considering intervention. Their viability depends on the military capabilities the interveners bring to the table. These options can stand alone, but success in intervention will be much more likely if interveners weave several options together into a coherent campaign that also includes humanitarian, diplomatic, economic, and related efforts.

Option 1: Develop Situational Awareness

Military capabilities can help those considering intervention to attain better awareness about what is actually going on. Uncertainty often surrounds situations where atrocities may occur or are ongoing. Military intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets and analysts bring capabilities to help decrease this uncertainty, although they cannot eliminate the inherent “fog” that clouds these situations. Military capabilities include the ability to map out the terrain with great accuracy, watch potential perpetrators, listen to their communications, and identify large population movements. Various militaries can also incorporate information from

human sources, and they are developing fusion capabilities to take various sources of intelligence and put them together into the most complete picture available.

The advantage of this option is obvious—better awareness should lead to better decisions on what to do. This option may also be advantageous in that, as some forms of surveillance are quite overt, it can serve to deter without a specific threat. Leaders may act very differently when they know they are under observation. There are distinct disadvantages to consider, however. ISR collection can be very costly, and there is always an opportunity cost. In addition, the assets and people doing the collecting may be at risk. Airborne sensors require the permission of the applicable regime, or they can violate a state's airspace. Doing so requires a degree of air superiority, otherwise airborne assets may be vulnerable to being shot down, which would greatly escalate the situation. Sensors on maritime vessels can be very useful, but they may be vulnerable to mines or missiles. Observers on the ground are vulnerable to being killed or captured. All of these risks to people and equipment can be mitigated, but doing so usually requires a larger footprint, which may exacerbate the situation.

Option 2: Use the Threat of Force to Deter Violence

In addition to threatening diplomatic, economic, and technical sanctions, states and coalitions can threaten military force to deter mass atrocities. As discussed earlier, the state or coalition must have the capability to carry out the threat, the threat must be credible in the context of the situation, and the threat must be communicated effectively to the appropriate people. Military actions, such as the movement of forces and overt surveillance, can enhance the credibility of the deterrent threat as well as help leaders communicate this threat. A deterrent threat may be enough to stop a bad situation from deteriorating into violence, but even if it does not, many of the military actions undertaken to enhance the threat may be very helpful in

preparing forces for follow-on intervention. A deployment of troops and aircraft to a neighboring country or positioning naval vessels off the coast can both enhance deterrence and enable follow-on options.

There is evidence to suggest that, in many cases of potential atrocities, it might not take very much to deter those who would initiate the brutality. When contemplating mass atrocities, leaders have kept a close eye on reactions to their rhetoric and preliminary movements.¹¹ It is a troubling fact that many of them took inaction as a signal of indifference. Furthermore, some misunderstood inaction as a subtle form of acquiescence. When western powers have shown early interest, however, deterrence has been effective. If this is the case, military actions, even limited ones, may have a great effect in preventing atrocities from occurring in the first place.

There are many ways to use military force to back up deterrent threats. The first broad category of actions is discussed in Option 1 above—initiating intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance actions to increase awareness. If done overtly, this can have a deterrent effect in and of itself, as people tend to act differently when they know they are under the spotlight. A second category of military actions involves taking actions that signal resolve. Examples of this include publicly announcing that forces are on alert or initiating a major exercise designed to test skill sets required for intervention. A key consideration for signaling is making sure that the information is communicated to the intended audience—those contemplating atrocities. A third category involves taking preliminary steps toward military intervention. Coalitions would have to carry out these preparations anyway prior to following through on an intervention threat.

These include logistical activities such as pre-positioning of equipment and supplies, making

¹¹ Samantha Power writes, “If anything testifies to the U.S. capacity for influence, it is the extent to which the perpetrators kept an eye trained on Washington and other Western capitals as they decided how to proceed.... Because so many individual perpetrators were killing for the first time and deciding daily how far they would go, the United States and its allies missed critical opportunities to try and deter them.” Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 506-507.

infrastructure improvements at existing bases and ports in the region, establishing new bases and ports, or the actual movement of forces. They may also include a high-profile planning conference between coalition members, drafting of a mandate for an intervening force, the establishment of a coalition command structure, or the publishing of rules of engagement. A final category for military actions that deter is show-of-presence operations. The presence of military forces in the general area can have a significant deterrent effect. Some ISR functions serve this purpose as well, especially when sensors are located on airborne and maritime platforms. Anchoring a formation of naval vessels off the coast or flying warplanes over the region can back up a deterrent threat. Establishment of a no-fly zone is also a form of deterrence through show-of-presence. One of the most credible show-of-presence operations involves the deployment of ground forces to a strategic position, perhaps to bases in a neighboring country or along a political border.

If chosen with the audience in mind, the actions described above have the advantage of making the deterrent threat more credible. Therefore, they increase the chance that deterrence may work, which is desirable because deterrence is best way to stop atrocities at lowest cost and risk. If deterrence fails, many of these actions can facilitate follow-on options for intervention. There are some disadvantages to these actions, however. In the big picture, a deterrent threat may be enough to stop a bad situation from getting worse, but it will do little to address the underlying issues. Additionally, a deterrent threat could create a situation that encourages prolonged oppression. The deterrent threat may keep the situation below the threshold of violence, but many will continue to suffer cruelties short of violence. Deterrence also takes great will on the part of the state or coalition issuing the deterrent threat. The threat may need to be in place for some time, because deterrence involves making a threat and waiting for the adversary

to respond. The initiative lies with the potential perpetrators, and they may simply choose to wait it out. Furthermore, deterrent threats are more difficult to communicate than many realize, making it essential that the threat be communicated consistently through as many avenues as possible. Conducting show-of-presence operations can put military forces at risk of being injured, captured or killed, which would escalate tensions to an unacceptable level. Finally, when taking concrete steps toward intervention as a part of deterrence, there tends to be a momentum toward action that can put pressure on leaders to escalate. They must remain aware of this when choosing military actions to deter.

Option 3: Use the Threat of Force, or the Actual Use of Force, to Compel Perpetrators to Stop

If deterrence fails and violence begins, states can threaten military force to compel the perpetrators of violence to stop. Deterrent and compellent threats are similar in that capability, credibility, and communication are important. There are some important differences, however. While deterrent threats tend to be somewhat general and open-ended, threats to compel will probably need to be very specific and have an associated deadline. Schelling confirms the importance of timing in compellence:

Compellence has to be definite... There has to be a deadline, otherwise tomorrow never comes. If the action carries no deadline it is only a posture, or a ceremony with no consequences.... Compellence, to be effective, can't wait forever. Still, it has to wait a little; collision can't be instantaneous. The compellent threat has to be put into motion to be credible, and then the victim must yield. Too little time, and compliance becomes impossible; too much time, and compliance becomes necessary. Thus compellence involves timing in a way that deterrence typically does not.¹²

Therefore, once violence begins, compellent threats can help stop a worsening situation. When making these threats, coalitions must be committed to action if the perpetrators do not yield.

¹² Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 72.

If the deadline passes without compliance, the interveners must follow through, or future threats will be discounted or dismissed. The key challenge is to use military force to inflict maximum punishment to the perpetrators within international guidelines on the use of force, including proportionality and discrimination. The use of force must be proportional to the objective, and those using force must adopt measures to discriminate between those guilty of perpetrating violence and innocents, including innocent members of the people group to which the perpetrators belong. These factors apply to this option as well as all other options involving the actual use of force.

When making a compellent threat, states and coalitions can choose many of the same military actions as when making deterrent threats. Signaling, preparation, and show-of-presence actions are appropriate for increasing the credibility of the compellent threat. Once the deadline passes, military force inflicts the highest possible cost on the perpetrators. This requires knowing what the perpetrators—especially their leaders—value. Personal and cultural knowledge is indispensable in determining how to inflict this cost. There are numerous methods for inflicting cost on the perpetrators. Perhaps the most familiar involves destroying targets of value to the perpetrators through indirect means such as bombs, missiles, and artillery. Less familiar are offensive actions in cyberspace, but these can also have effects that are very detrimental to the perpetrators. Other actions include capturing or blockading key economic, political, or cultural targets of importance to the perpetrators. Yet another way of increasing the pressure on the perpetrators is to inflict punishment on those who have influence over the leaders. This course of action, sometimes called *crony attack*, can be very effective, but interveners must be careful to adhere to the principle of discrimination.

All of these military actions can increase the cost of continuing the violence. The goal is not to weaken the perpetrators militarily or deny certain courses of action to them (such actions are discussed later in other military options). This is because perpetrators may be able to endure attacks on their military capabilities and still carry out their goals. The cost to the perpetrators—literally the pain they must suffer—must rise to unacceptable levels for compellence to work.

There are two primary advantage of compellence. First, the threat alone may be enough to stop the violence. If it is not, military actions to compel are generally not as costly or as risky to the intervening coalition as the more robust military options discussed later. Compellence allows the coalition to pressure the perpetrators without putting its men and women between victims and perpetrators. As with deterrence, the fundamental disadvantage to compellence is that the perpetrators still have a choice. They determine if they will comply with the demands before the deadline. Furthermore, crafty opponents can game the system—they can do just enough to forestall military action while never fully cooperating (and they may secretly continue the atrocities). When the deadline passes and force begins, the perpetrators determine how much pain they can withstand. The coalition must be committed to following through with its original threat until the perpetrators acquiesce, and this could take some time. Perpetrators often have tremendous staying power in the face of adversity. They can choose to endure the short-term costs so that they can realize the long-term benefits of attaining their objectives. They may even increase the pace of the atrocities because they perceive their time to be limited. Moreover, when coalitions attack targets of value, this can have the negative consequence of unifying neutral members of the population behind the perpetrators. If the perpetrators are able to withstand the pressure of compellence, however, there are other military options available to interveners.

Option 4: Protect the Victims

Provided there is enough of it available, military force can protect the victims of mass atrocities. The underlying assumption is that the interveners can, in fact, identify the victims. This is not always easy to do, as shades of ambiguity are normal in these situations. Atrocities rarely occur in a vacuum. They are often preceded by long periods of conflict between people groups, and there are few, if any, innocent sides. Samantha Power acknowledges this when she discusses the difficulty U.S. officials have experienced when assessing these situations. “Because genocide is usually veiled under the cover of war,” she writes, “some U.S. officials at first had genuine difficulty distinguishing deliberate atrocities against civilians from conventional conflict.”¹³ This task is all the more difficult when there is a large “neutral” population present.¹⁴ Nevertheless, there are perpetrators and victims, and knowledgeable sources, especially people on the ground, can help to distinguish between them.

This option is about using force for defense, and in most circumstances, the only sure way to defend the victims from further attacks is with ground forces. These ground forces have natural advantages—their proximity to the situation allows them a perspective that is impossible to duplicate from more remote positions. This proximity is also their fundamental disadvantage. To be effective at defense, ground forces must insert themselves between the victims and perpetrators both literally and figuratively. This makes them vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, ground force deployments are costly, and they are not easy to bring to an end. Placing ground

¹³ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 505.

¹⁴ If there is a large neutral population present (and this is usually the case), campaign planners must consider their preferences and reactions when designing an intervention, especially one with a large ground presence. The worst case would be to have the neutral parties turn against the interveners in an insurgency-like action. The best case would be to recruit the neutral population to help in protecting victims and identifying perpetrators. A realistic goal will probably be to keep the neutral parties from choosing sides until the violence subsides, then involve them in a lasting political solution. In this way, we see how intervening with a large ground force shares many similarities to counterinsurgency.

forces in the middle of a situation requires a very high level of commitment on the part of the interveners.

The fundamental challenge for interveners lies in separating perpetrators from victims, then enforcing the separation until the threat of violence subsides. There are several ways to accomplish this, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. One alternative involves voluntary evacuation by the victims. To implement this, the interveners would establish safe areas for the victims, advertise them (requires means of communicating with the victims), and allow the victims to enter these areas. If genocidal acts are ongoing, traveling may be difficult, or even impossible, for victims. If this is the case, the interveners could establish safe passage routes or offer transportation for the victims. A major advantage of this approach is that the interveners can choose where to place the safe areas based on terrain, political borders, defensible positions, available lines of communication, natural resources, and other factors. Sometimes, however, victims band together in ad hoc safe areas when they are attacked. Intervenors can choose to fortify these ad hoc safe areas instead of establishing new ones, but this negates the advantage of choosing the safe areas. Another variant of this approach is to establish a demilitarized zone between existing areas populated by different people groups. In order to secure the safe areas from the perpetrators, interveners may need to construct fences, walls, or other barriers, and this can be a costly undertaking. A major challenge for interveners is the administration of the safe areas. They must determine entrance criteria (including whether or not to require victims to disarm), establish a registration system, provide basic needs and services, and ensure security within the areas.

If a voluntary separation does not fit the situation, interveners can institute a mandatory separation between victims and perpetrators. The major challenge with this approach is

determining how to use force to separate the groups. Any mandatory separation will involve great upheaval and is likely to provoke widespread opposition. Heavy handedness may backfire in pushing neutrals over to the side of the perpetrators, yet a lack of force may indicate weakness to the perpetrators and invite attacks against the interveners. Establishing appropriate avenues of communication with the population will be important to inform them of what is happening and why. Intervenors must also meet the challenges of establishing safe areas described above. The initial separation phase will be dangerous and require large amounts of manpower to execute. Once the victims and perpetrators are separated, there may be less need for large forces, especially if they can assume defensible positions, secure their supply routes, and enjoy access to airpower, artillery, and ISR sensors.

Perhaps the most dangerous course of action for the interveners involves policing. The intervening force would enforce separation between perpetrators and victims on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood, block-by-block, or even house-by-house basis. This approach is the least intrusive from the population's perspective, but it requires the highest commitment from the intervening coalition. Because this approach is similar to counterinsurgency, it will require similar force ratios. Historically, to secure the populations from insurgents, counterinsurgents need to have 20 people on the ground for every 1000 people in the population. These ratios may vary to fit the situation and the technical capabilities of the interveners, but just like policing in major cities, there is no substitute for a continuing ground presence in the bad parts of town. Perhaps the biggest disadvantage of this approach is that it could evolve into insurgency, as the perpetrators shift their focus from the victims to the interveners.

While this approach requires a huge commitment on the part of the interveners, it does not require the intervening coalition to choose sides publicly. While the interveners must

distinguish between victims and perpetrators as they execute the plan, public proclamations can emphasize a neutral message—highlighting the need for calm and a cessation of violence. The next option, however, commits the interveners to choosing sides.

Option 5: Enable Victims to Defend Themselves

As an alternative to using its own forces to defend the victims, an intervening state or coalition can provide equipment, expertise, and support to the victims to allow them to defend themselves. There are several examples of victim groups who were able to organize themselves and offer stiff resistance to the perpetrators of atrocities.¹⁵ The victims may need military equipment such as weapons and vehicles in order to even the playing field. They may need training in basic tactical skills as well as advice on operational matters. They may require intelligence or logistical support to mount an effective resistance. Military forces can provide these types of support, and they generally can do this at a much lower cost than it would take to defend the victims themselves. This is the major advantage of this option. It allows interveners to make the playing field more even—perhaps even create a stable balance of power—without putting large amounts of their people in harm’s way.

There are several disadvantages to this approach, however. The first is that it will almost certainly promote the continuation of violence, at least for a time. While the victims may choose to defend and deter with their new capabilities, they may just as well choose to go on an offensive campaign, avenging the atrocities that have been committed against them. It is perhaps too much to expect of the victims to give them the tools to fight back and expect them to show restraint. In many cultures, the preservation of honor requires revenge, and its pursuit can become an obsession. Instead of halting genocide, this approach can encourage a descent into Hobbes’ state of nature.

¹⁵ Examples include the Tutsis in Rwanda, and the Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) in Bosnia.

While this approach involves choosing a side, it still allows the interveners to claim a moral distinction from the perpetrators. Because defense is the mechanism, the interveners can portray their actions as defensive. This is not as provocative as the next two options. These options are offensive, because force is used to do harm to the perpetrators. Their use can provoke widespread criticism and even provide an opening for spoilers to portray the interveners and perpetrators as equally immoral.

Option 6: Attack the Perpetrators

Military force can be used to attack the perpetrators, decreasing their capability to continue the violence. This is force used for offensive purposes, and technology has made modern military forces exceptionally good at it. Modern militaries have many methods available for attack. Airstrikes, missiles, and artillery can deliver deadly, precise firepower against targets, including the perpetrators themselves, their key facilities, and critical infrastructure. Maritime forces can establish blockades and attack perpetrators at sea or in the littorals. Direct action by special and conventional forces can be used to kill or capture perpetrators and take control of their bases of operation—allowing exploitation to develop follow-on options. Electronic attack can be used to jam or hijack the perpetrators’ communication channels. Cyber attack can deny the perpetrators’ use of computer networks and the internet. Interveners can use psychological attack to communicate messages that are harmful to the perpetrators’ cause. Depending on the situation, any or all of these options can be employed to weaken the perpetrators and, eventually, make them incapable of continuing the violence.

The key to this option’s effectiveness lies in determining where to apply military force. Unlike using force to compel, where targets are chosen for their perceived value, offensive operations require that targets be chosen for their effect on the perpetrator network. Perpetrators

do not conduct atrocities in isolation—they need the support of a network in order to conduct these atrocities on a mass scale. Even if the perpetrator network consists of many loosely connected groups, there are still connections. Therefore, the destruction of some targets will have effects that reverberate across the network of perpetrators. Some parts of the network are *centers of gravity*, a term that communicates their importance to the perpetrators. While it is possible that limited attacks on centers of gravity will severely weaken the perpetrator network, it is more common for an offensive campaign to combine multiple attacks on different parts of the network in order to subject the perpetrators to ever-increasing pressure by taking away their capabilities. Ideally, a campaign would paralyze the perpetrators—they would lose cohesion and dissolve as a network. While this rarely happens in practice, offensive campaigns can be very effective in weakening the network and making it much more difficult for the perpetrators to continue committing atrocities.

A major advantage of this approach is that many western militaries are competent and comfortable with offense. This closely mirrors what military forces are equipped and trained to do in their wartime roles, so much of their peacetime preparation carries over to this role. This option also leverages the technological advantages that interveners often enjoy over the perpetrators. As a result, many of the offensive methods present lower risk to the interveners than other options. A major disadvantage to the offense is that, as interveners conduct operations that closely resemble war, critics make moral comparisons between them and the perpetrators. This is especially true when attacks result in reports of widespread collateral damage (sometimes these reports are fabricated by the perpetrators to encourage this criticism). While the coalition must be able to justify its actions in the context of stopping the atrocities, it will have to appeal to the Law of Armed Conflict for specific justification, including the concepts of proportionality

and discrimination. Closely related is the problem of targeting within a coalition. Targeting decisions can become emotional, and coalition members do not always agree on target lists. At best, this can cause frustrating delays in the operation. It can also water down the campaign to the point where the attacks become ineffective. While it is relatively easy to strike something, creating a coherent offensive plan requires a high degree of knowledge about the perpetrators. To attack the network, the interveners must have information about it, and sometimes this is difficult to acquire. Another disadvantage is that perpetrators can be very resilient in the face of attacks. These attacks may unite the population behind them, and they can adopt tactics such as movement and camouflage that decrease their vulnerability. These measures can prolong the campaign and make it difficult to attain the coalition's military objective of stopping the violence.

While this option involves attacking the impersonal network of perpetrators, the final option is quite personal, and it may include attacking the perpetrators' leading personalities...

Option 7: Attack the Leaders

Military force can be used to attack those that lead the perpetrators. Leadership is important to any organization, and in cases of atrocities, charismatic leaders can provide both the rhetoric and direction to transform emotion into action. Many historical cases of atrocities are closely associated with infamous leaders, including Hitler, Hussein, and Milosevic. Although the hatreds that they leveraged would have existed in their absence, it is plausible that the mass atrocities would not have occurred without their leadership. Attacking the leadership, therefore, may deny the perpetrators the primary catalyst they need to unify their efforts. This is especially true if the perpetrator network is highly centralized. In situations where the network is a loose affiliation of subgroups, attacking the leadership will be less lucrative.

There is an important distinction between attacking leaders directly and attacking their ability to lead. Military force can do both, but attacking the ability to lead is usually a much easier task. Direct attack on leaders, i.e. killing or capturing them, has proven to be very difficult in practice. Even when successful, these efforts generally did not cause the enemy network to crumble. The act of targeting the leaders, however, did have beneficial effects to the overall effort, as it forced these leaders to adopt protective practices that greatly inhibited their ability to lead. They had great difficulty traveling, meeting with people, making public speeches, or even placing private phone calls. This increase in personal friction made it more difficult for the leader to remain effective, and this can be an important part of a military campaign to protect. When attacking the leaders of a genocidal effort, instead of directly targeting the leaders themselves, it may make more sense to attack their ability to lead through communications jamming, psychological operations, and destroying their command and control facilities.

The primary advantage of this option, as stated earlier, is that denying leadership to the perpetrator network can have a profound effect on the overall effort. In addition, by personalizing the conflict in the form of an evil leader, coalition leaders may be able to galvanize their own public support for a strong commitment to the intervention campaign. A corresponding disadvantage is that this option personalizes the conflict irrevocably. Once the coalition determines that a leader is worthy of killing or capturing, it becomes practically impossible to negotiate or compromise with that leader. On a tactical level, direct action against a leader requires predictive intelligence, and this can be very difficult to obtain. These efforts are also very resource-intensive. It may take many days, weeks, or months of surveillance, with actioning forces on some form of alert, in order to execute a successful attack on a leader.

Nevertheless, this option will remain a tempting one in cases of mass atrocities, as the sheer evil of these acts will encourage interveners to target those at the top of the perpetrator network.

Constructing Campaigns to Stop Mass Atrocities

Each of these military options can be implemented in isolation. That course is likely to be ineffective, however, especially if the situation crosses over into violence. A more effective approach will be to construct campaigns that weave several of these options into a coherent whole. The goal is for the different mechanisms for force incorporated in the options—deterrence, compellence, defense, and offense—to complement each other, increasing the likelihood that military force will stop the violence. Planners will have an easier time doing this if they have a general model of military intervention to follow. The following is a proposal for that model.

The Conflict Curve

One tool that military theorists have used to understand the evolution of conflict is the conflict curve. This tool depicts the intensity of conflict over time. Generally, conflicts begin as tensions rise between two or more parties. This escalation continues until violence breaks out. The escalation intensifies until the conflict level is at its maximum, then, as one side begins to prevail, the conflict de-escalates. At some point, the conflict passes beneath the violence threshold. Eventually, the conflict subsides and the situation gains a degree of stability. A typical conflict curve is presented as Figure 2.

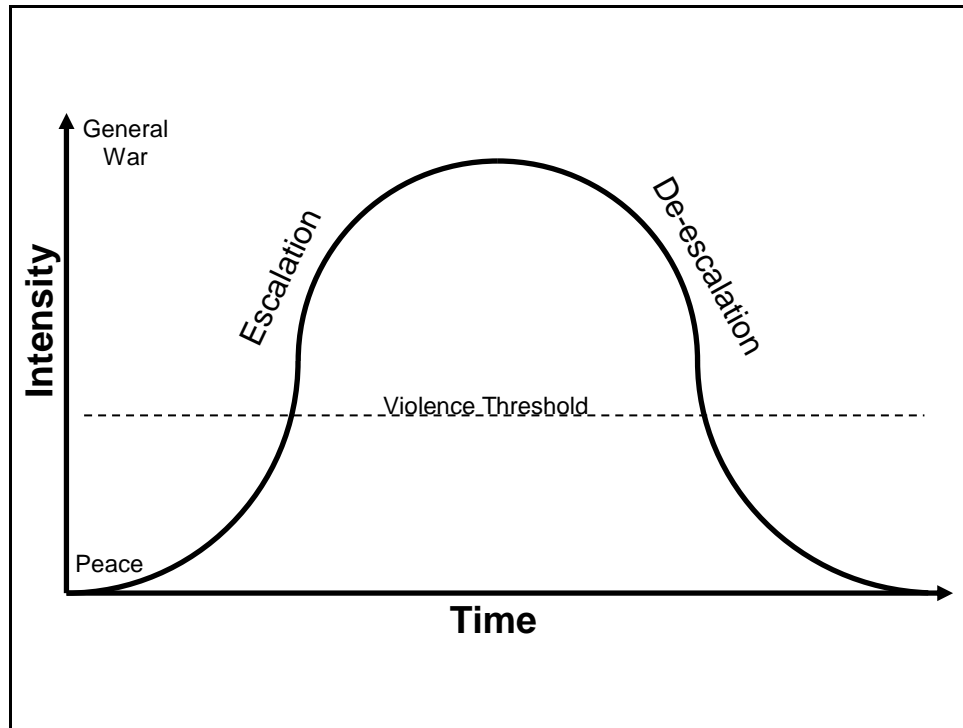


Figure 2: The Conflict Curve.

This is a simplified analysis tool with many imperfections. Criticisms of the conflict curve include the observation that conflicts rarely follow a smooth escalation and de-escalation. They tend to rise and fall repeatedly before a stable peace is realized. Additionally, different aspects of the conflict tend to escalate and de-escalate at different rates. These criticisms are valid, and planners should remember them when applying the tool. Nonetheless, the conflict curve is a useful tool for conceptualizing conflict because it provides a useful background for putting other elements of a military campaign into context. One of these essential elements is campaign phasing.

Phasing

Another key way that military leaders and their planners use to communicate their concepts for a military campaign is through phasing, i.e. breaking the campaign into phases.

U.S. military doctrine discusses the usefulness of phasing:

...campaigns and single major operations can normally be divided into phases to logically organize a campaign's diverse, extended, and dispersed activities. Phasing assists Joint Force Commanders and staffs to visualize and think through the entire operation or campaign and to define requirements in terms of forces, resources, time, space, and purpose. The primary benefit of phasing is that it assists commanders in systematically achieving objectives that cannot be achieved concurrently by arranging smaller, related operations in a logical sequence.¹⁶

Military campaigns can grow to be immensely complex. Dividing the campaign up into phases helps the leader conceptualize the major things that must be accomplished for success, and then to keep everyone working together to accomplish these things. Phases, therefore, are important for both concept development and communication.

The United States has adopted a general phasing model for its campaigns. Its military leaders are not required to use this model, but most of them do. This model is presented in

Figure 3:

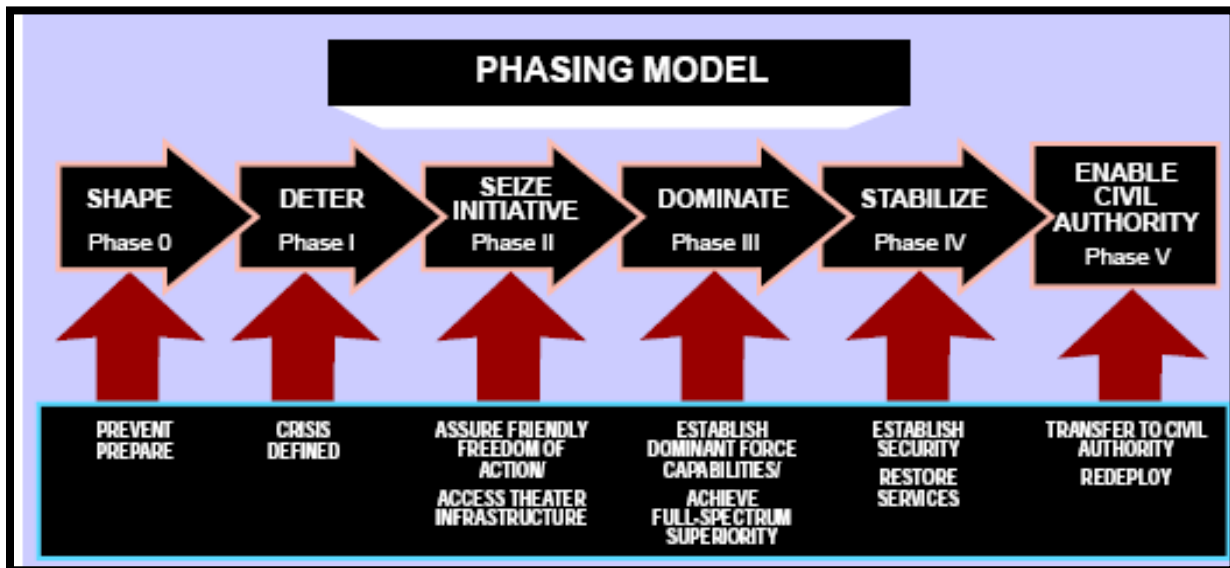


Figure 3: The U.S. Phasing Model.

Source: *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning*, 26 December 2006.

¹⁶ Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, 26 December 2006, IV-32, 33.

Unsurprisingly, this model shares a key characteristic with the conflict curve—it shows how military operations tend to grow in intensity, reach a zenith, and then decline over time. There is a definite escalation implied in Phases 0 through 2, while operations reach their maximum intensity in Phase 3, and then they de-escalate through Phase 5. Due to this, it is relatively straightforward to match the phasing model with the conflict curve. Figure 4 shows this match.

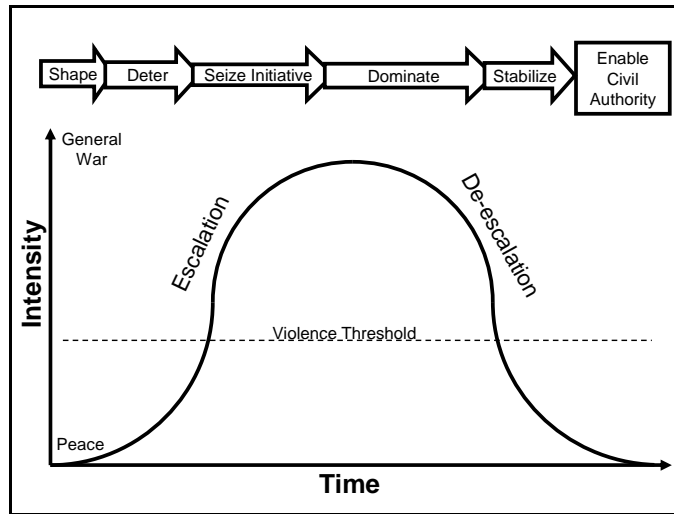


Figure 4: Matching the Phasing Model and the Conflict Curve.

A key feature of these two tools, perhaps the dominant feature, is their emphasis on the point where escalation ends and de-escalation begins. This point has a specific name in military doctrine—the culminating point. The concept of culmination is important to all military operations, including military interventions to stop mass atrocities. Its application in these operations, however, may be very different from general war.

Culmination

Clausewitz first identified the phenomenon of a culminating point. He observed that an attacking force would typically lose strength during a sustained attack.¹⁷ As it ventured further into enemy territory, this force had to constantly expend resources and assume risk due to the

¹⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 528.

hostility of the population, the increasing length of supply lines, and losses inflicted by a strong defense.¹⁸ The attacking force, therefore, would eventually reach a point—the culminating point—where it could no longer continue the attack due to its weakened condition.¹⁹ Modern military doctrine has recognized the validity of this concept, adopted it, and expanded it to defensive operations as well. U.S. doctrine, for example, contains this definition of the culminating point:

culminating point — The point at which a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operations, offense or defense. For the offense, the point at which effectively continuing the attack is no longer possible and the force must consider reverting to a defensive posture or attempting an operational pause. For the defense, the point at which effective counteroffensive action is no longer possible.²⁰

Remembering that the conflict curve is a simplified representation of reality, the culminating point generally corresponds to the point of highest intensity, as operations beyond this point tend to de-escalate due to the attackers inability to continue. Figure 5 shows a typical culminating point on the conflict curve.

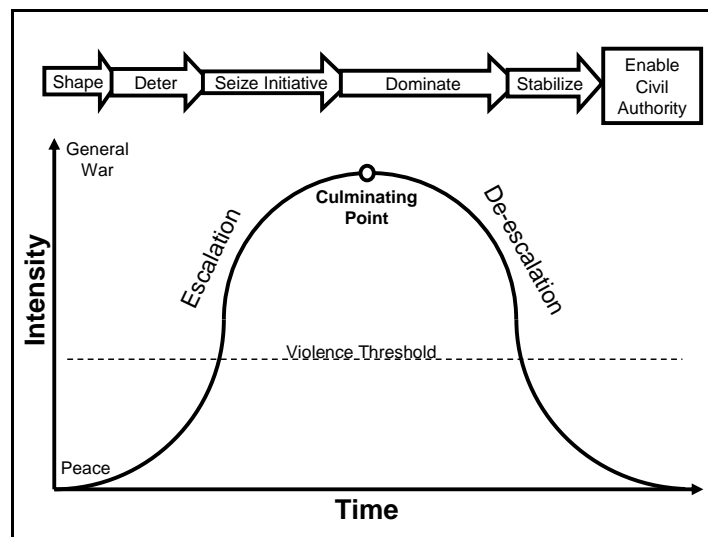


Figure 5: The Culminating Point on the Conflict Curve.

¹⁸ Ibid, 567.

¹⁹ Ibid, 528.

²⁰ Joint Publication 5-0, IV-29.

Culmination and Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities

Like those who attack in war, perpetrators of mass atrocities are subject to culmination, although this phenomenon tends to take a different form. When they begin to commit mass atrocities, most perpetrators instinctively know their operations will be subject to culmination. While military forces on the attack tend to be limited by *geography*—the further they go into enemy territory, the more difficult it becomes to keep going—perpetrators are primarily limited in *time*. Once they begin, it is only a matter of time before they must stop. They know there is a chance that outsiders will intervene if they find out what is really going on, so they try to buy time in early stages by keeping their atrocities a secret. Once their acts become widely reported, they instinctively speed up the pace of their operations, recognizing that their window of opportunity is finite. They may worry about a backlash if the neutrals in their own populations turn against them because of suffering due to world pressure, sanctions, and military attacks by interveners. They may also worry about running short on resources, including fuel, food, ammunition, and money. The prospect of culminating after a short time period drives them to act with haste once they start.

Alternatively, states are typically slow to intervene (if they intervene at all) due to their distance from the situation, lack of awareness, reluctance to commit in the face of uncertainty, and international norms calling for the use of force only as a last resort. If they do intervene, their approach tends to be gradual, as more potent measures are only adopted after it becomes apparent that lesser measures are not working. This asymmetry, characterized by a tendency to hurry on the part of the perpetrators combined with reluctance to escalate on the part of the interveners, works against those who want to stop mass atrocities. To be successful, a model of military intervention must account for it.

In fact, this asymmetry can be illustrated on the conflict curve. Once they make the decision to initiate atrocities, perpetrators have a natural tendency to escalate as quickly as they can—they want to go up the curve and meet their objectives as soon as possible. Interveners, on the other hand, are slow to respond—it is almost as if they are on a different curve than the perpetrators. The result is a zone where the perpetrators have an incentive, and usually have the ability, to escalate at a pace that interveners cannot match (mainly due to reluctance to get involved, political norms against intervention, and logistical constraints). In military terms, the perpetrators enjoy *escalation dominance* in this zone.²¹ This only lasts until the intervening coalition brings its superior resources to bear, but the problem is that the interveners have an inherent difficulty doing so in time to stop atrocities. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

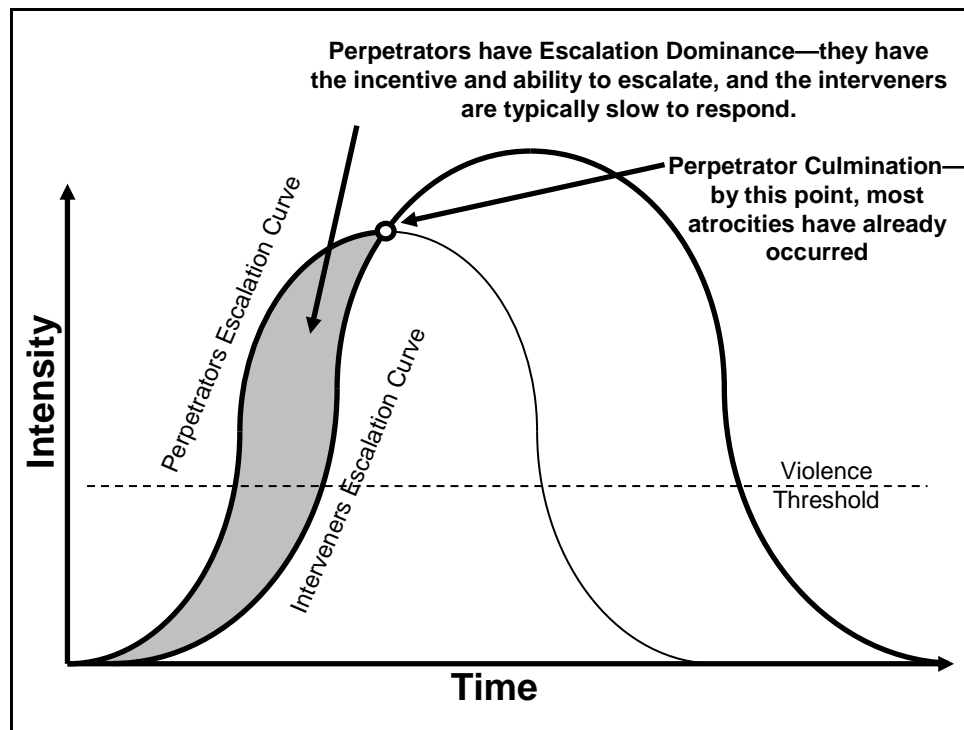


Figure 6: Perpetrators and Interveners on Different Curves.

²¹ While *escalation dominance* is a term that typically arises in discussions of nuclear deterrence, it can be applied at all levels of war. In this case, it simply refers to the condition where one side has both the ability and incentive to escalate, because it enjoys inherent advantages at higher levels of conflict.

The net result of this phenomenon is that interveners must overcome a natural military disadvantage when trying to stop mass atrocities. This, of course, does not mean that stopping atrocities is impossible. It simply means that interveners generally begin in a weak position relative to the perpetrators. This fact has profound implications for how military force can best stop mass atrocities. In short, interveners must do what they can to avoid situations that favor the perpetrators. *Once the perpetrators begin to carry out mass atrocities, it is more likely that they will culminate than for the interveners to stop it with brute force.*

The goal of military intervention

Since this model illustrates how intervention through brute force is unlikely to be successful, at least not before many innocents suffer, interveners are wise to use military force to in a way that maximizes its coercive effect. *The primary goal of military intervention in stopping mass atrocities is to prevent the atrocities from occurring, and if they do occur, to convince the perpetrators to stop the violence as soon as possible.* Put another way, in stopping mass atrocities, *coercion is primary—brute force is secondary.* If coercion does not work (i.e. the perpetrators begin the atrocities and cannot be compelled to stop), and interveners must resort to brute force, many atrocities will occur before brute force can take effect.

This is very different from the way that military leaders and planners generally view the role of force. The common approach is to view brute force as the primary mechanism; coercion is secondary. Typical military campaigns include attempts at coercion up front, but the focus is on being prepared to “swiftly defeat” or “win decisively” if coercion does not work. For example, a typical military mission statement for a crisis scenario often begins with a sentence such as “Joint Task Force X will deploy forces and conduct operations to deter Y.” The next sentence invariably starts with, “If deterrence fails...,” and the rest of the statement (usually a

paragraph) discusses how to defeat the enemy with brute force. U.S. military officers, with few exceptions, tend to view problems through a brute force lens. This should not be surprising, as they spend the majority of their professional lives honing brute force skills, and the United States almost always enjoys advantages in brute force over potential adversaries in traditional wartime scenarios.

But stopping atrocities is not traditional war, and neither the United States nor western coalitions enjoy brute force advantages in the critical early stages of a crisis. They do enjoy advantages in coercion, however, and this has important implications for military campaigns intended to stop mass atrocities.

Stopping Mass Atrocities Earlier

If western powers want to stop mass atrocities earlier, they must maximize their natural advantages and minimize their innate disadvantages. Their advantages lie in the ability to coerce, especially to deter the violence from starting. They are capable of carrying out military intervention, they can make credible threats to do so (as they have intervened in previous circumstances), and they have access to many avenues of communication to those contemplating mass atrocities. Furthermore, although the perpetrators may or may not understand that they have a natural advantage early in a crisis, they are likely to care about what happens next, and a deterrent threat can change their personal calculus. Indeed, just communicating the fact that they are interested in the crisis can be all that is needed to deter.

Therefore, in the early stages of a potential crisis, the most effective role of military force is to enhance the deterrent threat. This means that military options should be chosen to send appropriate signals, including showing an interest in the developing crisis and communicating both the capability and willingness to use force to stop mass atrocities. In fact, western powers

should probably overplay their hand a bit in order to convince the perpetrators of the deterrent threat. This may include actions that some will consider to be “saber-rattling.” Critics may argue that this will escalate the situation, but the evidence suggests that it is inaction (especially when it creates the perception of disinterest) that most contributes to situations of genocide and mass atrocities. More activity on the part of the western powers is better than less, and this activity should include the threat of military force when the situation dictates in order to discourage perpetrators from setting the atrocities in motion.

The western powers can also mitigate their disadvantage in the early stages of a crisis by shortening the time it takes for them to move from one option to another, essentially steepening their escalation curve. A problem that coalitions have is that it typically takes too long to determine that one option is not working and adopt another approach. This is one of the reasons that perpetrators have an advantage in the early stages of a crisis. As stated earlier, this problem is largely political and legal in nature. In addition, there is usually a debate over who or what organizing body has the authority to move up to the next option. From a military perspective, however, there are practical steps that states and coalitions can take to make things go more quickly. These include adopting military doctrine and creating standing operational plans for intervention.

Adopting a Model for Military Intervention

Military doctrines and plans for intervention should be built upon solid theories and lessons learned from history. While theory and history can be complex, models help to simplify these and clarify courses of action. One such model can be constructed from the discussion above. This model combines the conflict curves (one for the perpetrators and one for the interveners) with the military options listed earlier.

As mentioned previously, the primary goal of military force in stopping mass atrocities is to convince the perpetrators to forgo or stop the violence. Therefore, on the conflict curve, each military option can be represented as an arrow that originates on the escalation curve and cuts straight across to the de-escalation curve. This signifies that the perpetrators have chosen not to escalate further and conditions can begin to improve. A military option may work—it may prevent or stop the violence—or it may fail to convince the perpetrators. At that point, the intervening coalition can choose to escalate to a new, more intense, military option. This can be represented as another arrow placed higher on the escalation curve. As the options progress in intensity, the arrows pile on higher. Figure 7 illustrates this depiction.

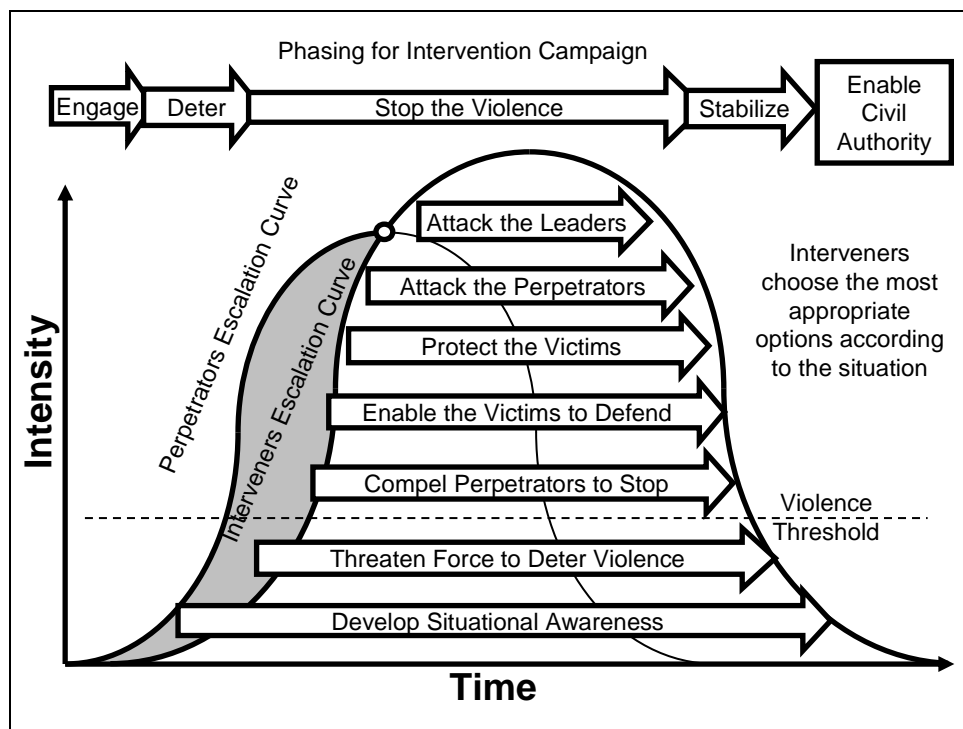


Figure 7: Model of Military Intervention.

The order of the military options deserves some explanation. While the options are listed in order of intensity, this is intensity as measured from many perspectives, including those of the perpetrators, victims, interveners, and the world at large. The least intense option is *Developing*

Situational Awareness, as it can be executed without threatening lethal force. *Deterrence* is the next broad option in terms of intensity, as its intent is to stop short of lethal force. *Compellence* is next because it occurs after violence begins, yet it still seeks to avoid the use of force.

Enabling the Victims to Protect Themselves is an option that can lead to the use of lethal force, even open civil war, yet it does not involve direct intervention by states and coalitions.

Protecting the Victims crosses the line into the direct use of brute force. It is probably the most dangerous option for an intervening force as it places their people in between perpetrators and victims. Because it is primarily defensive, this option maintains a degree of neutrality, however, and political compromise is still possible. Political compromise becomes much less likely when coalitions resort to the *Attack the Perpetrators* option. This option relies on the use of brute force for the offense, and it approaches open war between interveners and perpetrators. The conflict becomes personal when coalitions choose to implement the *Attack the Leaders* option. This option all but closes the window for a political solution, and its use of offensive force to target leaders directly can lead outside observers to equate the interveners and perpetrators, no matter how unfair an assertion this may be. Once a conflict escalates to this level, it will normally be resolved through mechanisms similar to general war, including culmination by the perpetrators and destruction caused by the interveners.

Conclusion: Campaigning to Protect

It is doubtful that any specific campaign to stop mass atrocities would contain all of the options described in the model. Successful campaigns, however, will combine several options into a course of action that places the perpetrators under maximum pressure to forgo or stop the atrocities. According to the model, this will mean adopting an approach that emphasizes coercion first. If coercion does not work, interveners can choose to progress to brute force. If

they do, they must realize that perpetrators have a natural advantage early in the crisis, and as they ratchet up in intensity, it becomes less likely that the crisis will end before mass atrocities occur.

Thus, the major lessons from this model are as follows. *If they want to prevent atrocities, western powers such as the United States should focus their efforts on deterrence. If they remain detached as the crisis approaches, they may provide a green light for the perpetrators. Once the atrocities start, they should shift to compellence quickly and communicate strong messages to stop. If compellence fails and the violence continues, the interveners are at a distinct disadvantage. Even if the coalition is willing to use significant military force to stop the violence, it is very likely that many atrocities will be committed before enough force arrives to make a difference. Unless the western powers can learn to act much more quickly than recent experiences suggest, reliance on a brute force solution is a losing proposition. Western powers must learn to increase their early efforts at discouraging mass atrocities or resign themselves to cleaning up after the fact.*

About the Author: Lt Col Clint “Q” Hinote is currently engaged in multiple projects dealing with airpower applications in irregular warfare at Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base. His previous assignment was Chief of the Strategy Division in the Central Command Air Forces Combined Air Operations Center, where he served as the lead air strategist and planner for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom from July 2006 to August 2007. Lt Col Hinote is a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, the USAF Weapons School, and the School of Advanced Air and Space Power Studies. He is a senior pilot with over 2400 flying hours, including operational experience the F-16 and F-117.