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Comments on the *Mass Atrocity Response Operations (MARO) Handbook*

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The *MARO Handbook* provides realistic scenarios and well-developed possible courses of action, which would enable strategists, policy makers and planners to prepare for an intervention operation to stop genocide and other mass atrocities. The handbook stipulates three defining characteristics of genocide and mass atrocities and eight operational and political implications. It offers well-founded advice and discusses the impossibility for an intervening force to remain impartial when mass atrocities are being committed. Also, unlike most peace and stability operations, MAROs must protect civilian victims from the perpetrators of mass atrocities and have to deter or defeat the perpetrators, in a similar way to other forces (usually guerrilla movements).

One purpose of the handbook was to map out operational responses to genocide and mass atrocities that can be implemented by the US military. The assumption was that compiling the handbook would produce a guide that could readily be pulled off the shelf by officials in the US National Security Council (NSC) and the Department of Defense (DoD) and put into practice. In addition, it was assumed that having such a plan available would make it easier for the US President and Secretary of Defense to react to genocide and mass atrocities by deploying the US military with the certainty that a well-developed operational plan could be implemented. Enlisting Sarah Sewall, one of the authors of the US Army/US Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual, helped elevate the credibility of the MARO project as well as the probability that the handbook would be taken seriously in the corridors of power. The handbook has been presented to US government agencies, including the military, and to international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

In spite of its intentions, it is questionable whether or not *MARO* would be something that the NSC and DoD would adopt. The DoD may be the master of the planning, doctrine, and training involved in deployment, but it is reluctant to become involved in new doctrinal commitments, especially given its existing ones involving counterinsurgency and peace and stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unless there is a new initiative from the US President or another compelling genocidal crisis, it is unlikely that the MARO project and handbook will be adopted as part of DoD doctrine regardless of the US Army Institute of Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute's efforts to persuade the DoD otherwise.

It can be argued that doctrine and operational plans that are sufficiently adequate to guide the deployment and operation of US forces to stop genocide and mass atrocities already exist. Even so, the United States has not deployed ground forces in a humanitarian intervention since 1993 in Somalia. After the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, both the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations ordered the NSC to devise contingency plans to respond to crises that can degenerate into

genocide or mass atrocities. For instance, in 2001, after President Bush pledged that there would be no genocide “on my watch,” he ordered the NSC to put together a contingency plan for Burundi as the country was moving through a very difficult phase in the peace process and it appeared that genocide would recur. While the contingency plan for Burundi was probably not as detailed as the *MARO Handbook*, the Burundi plan was put together with knowledge of the particular circumstances on the ground—something which *MARO* does not provide. In addition, it can be argued that the DoD already has response operations to genocide and mass atrocities covered with FM 3–24 (Army/Marine Corps Manual for Counter-insurgency); Joint Publication 3–07.3 (Peace Operations); and FM 3–07 (Army Manual for Stability Operations).¹ Intervention to stop genocide and mass atrocities involves peace enforcement and counterinsurgency (covered in FM 3–24 and JP 3–07.3) and the protection of civilian populations is outlined in JP 3–07.3 and FM 3–07. The US military is already training on the basis of this doctrine and applying it in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States has also developed rapid reaction capability which would enable its armed forces to intervene in mass atrocities.

In addition, guides already exist regarding the deployment of US forces from the continental United States to the distant locations in which genocide might take place. For example, in *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, Alan Kuperman² provided a detailed account of the airlift requirements for three different types of intervention—heavy, medium, and light—to stop genocide in Rwanda. The heavy and medium interventions would involve the deployment of the 82nd Airborne Division, massive use of the US air mobility fleet, and a major logistics and refuelling operation. The three scenarios underline the fact that US humanitarian intervention to stop genocide and mass atrocities would require a costly global effort, which may cause decision makers to think twice about ordering such a venture.

The fact remains that political will is the biggest obstacle to a US response to incidents of genocide and mass atrocities, the *MARO Handbook* and other manuals notwithstanding. In actuality, the United States politically has gravitated in the opposite direction from ordering US forces to intervene on the ground. After reacting to mass famine and widespread killing in Somalia, the United States withdrew its forces from Somalia after the “Black Hawk Down” incident of October 1993. The Congress and President decided that preventing Somalia from once again degenerating into the type of chaos that led to the famine and killings in the first place was not worth the cost of the deaths of eighteen service personnel. This decision was codified in May 1994, when the NSC issued Presidential Decision Directive 25, which restricted US participation in humanitarian intervention and peace and stability operations to situations in which the US interest was at stake. The Clinton administration’s active campaign against any type of intervention to stop the 1994 Rwandan Genocide was another sign of the United States’ aversion to the anticipated high costs in blood and treasure involved in military deployment. In Bosnia, the Bush and Clinton administrations allowed mass atrocities to continue for three years without sending in ground forces to stop it, fearing another Vietnam-type quagmire. Only after the Srebrenica massacre did the Clinton administration authorize the escalation of air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces. Ground forces were deployed only after the Dayton Accords finalized a ceasefire. Similarly, in Kosovo from 1998 to 1999, the United States did not react to mass atrocities by sending in ground troops. Instead, the United States used air strikes against Serbia and reacted to mass atrocities by deploying humanitarian relief units to Albania.

In response to the Rwandan Genocide, the Clinton administration proposed the African Crisis Response Force (ACRF) as the most logical way for the United States to help direct African militaries on the ground to stop mass atrocities. However, the initiative was judged to be too hegemonic and interventionist for African states to adopt. Therefore, the Clinton administration retreated and came back with a watered-down proposal—the African Crisis Response Initiative—that would train potential peacekeepers and do nothing to stop genocide or mass atrocities.

While President Bush promised that there would be no genocide on his watch and authorized a contingency plan for Burundi, he allowed genocide to grind on and on in Darfur, beginning in 2003, without responding. Even after Secretary of State Colin Powell had testified in 2004 that genocide was occurring in Darfur and after both houses of Congress had resolved that genocide was happening, the Bush administration did not act other than to support a weak African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission that did nothing to stop mass killings, displacement, rapes, and other atrocities. Barack Obama campaigned on a platform that included a no-fly zone to stop the Sudanese military from carrying out sustained campaigns involving mass atrocities in Darfur. He made no promises about placing US boots on the ground. When he came to office, there was no further mention of a no-fly zone. Presently, there is no indication that President Obama will deploy US forces to stop atrocities in Sudan or anywhere else.

If the United States will not intervene to stop genocide and mass atrocities, then who will? In Africa, the African Union is supposed to provide leadership in stopping genocide and mass atrocities. In 2003 the AU Peace and Security Council and Defense Chiefs, led by South Africa, authorized the creation of the African Standby Force (ASF), which included stopping genocide and mass atrocities as one of the six main tasks that had to be addressed by 2010. Some of the brigades of the ASF have already been created and developed rapid reaction forces that can be quickly deployed to stop genocide. Therefore, the ASF is in the process of developing the capability and the timeliness required to intervene and stop genocide. The United States could assist in providing training based upon the *MARO Handbook*. However, most African states would still be unwilling to intervene in the internal affairs of a fellow member of the African Union.

Given the reluctance of most African leaders to violate the sovereignty of a fellow leader's state, it would probably fall to a coalition of the willing, whose states would make the decision to assemble forces, downplay the significance of sovereignty, and intervene in the internal affairs of a "fraternal" state in order to stop genocide or mass atrocities. Rwanda is one state that has experienced genocide, expressed a willingness to deploy the Rwandan Defense Force to stop genocide and other mass atrocities, and deployed over 3,000 troops to Darfur for five years. However, Rwandan forces have committed mass atrocities in retribution for the 1994 genocide and may not be expected to act in the best interests of the international community. In any event, *MARO* might be useful to a coalition of the willing. Given the lack of political will to adopt and implement the *MARO* project, the United States and other states could offer the ASF and willing states, such as Rwanda, training and joint exercises based on *MARO*.

Another party that works to put an end to genocide is the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC's indictment of President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and other mass atrocity perpetrators has created a deterrent for other leaders who might be tempted to use genocide and other mass atrocities to wipe out an insurgency or an ethnic group to advance their own interests. In concert with pressure from the

ICC, the campaign at the United Nations for the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect principle provides another mechanism for pressuring leaders to not resort to genocide or mass atrocities to solve their problems. Leaders will be held responsible for their actions and stand a better chance of being deterred.

An alternative to persuading states that may be willing to intervene or influencing the United States is to aid guerrilla groups that are attempting to overthrow the regime that has decided to carry out genocide. The United States provided military assistance to the Bosnian government in 1995 and to the Kosovo Liberation Army in 1999 in the fight to end ethnic cleansing. Aid to the Rwandan Patriotic Front might have enabled it to push through to the capital, Kigali, and other parts of Rwanda in a more rapid time frame and stop the genocide. Similarly, aid to the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) might have brought an end to the Sudanese military and *janjaweed* militia's genocide in Darfur in 2004. However, the volatility of guerrilla movements and their tendency to violate human rights make it difficult for the United States and other actors to work too closely with them on a regular basis.

In a September 30, 2010 op-ed in *The New York Times*, "Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold," Nicholas Kristof mapped out the path to genocide/mass atrocities in which Sudanese forces would invade Southern Sudan in the wake of the January 2011 referendum and carry out mass atrocities as they did in Darfur. In a perfect world, the Obama administration would deploy the US military, armed with the MARO guide, to stop Sudanese forces and protect Southern Sudanese civilians. However, US interest in Southern Sudan is not enough for the US government to generate sufficient political will to intervene. Instead, in order to prevent this scenario from coming to pass, the United States stepped up its diplomatic campaign in both North and South Sudan. Sustained US aid to the government of South Sudan (GOSS) to stop the northern Sudanese military from committing mass atrocities may be the most effective way to do stop genocide. Another scenario would have the rapid reaction force of the East African Brigade of the African Standby Force, led by a Rwandan special forces battalion and backed by the United States, deploying to stop genocide in Southern Sudan.

In conclusion, *MARO* could be useful but not for the purpose for which it was intended. It is unlikely that the handbook will become part of US military doctrine and training. However, if the handbook is distributed more widely to willing states, organizations, and institutions in areas where the threat of genocide or mass atrocities exists, it might have the effect of preparing willing states and organizations to intervene.

Notes

1. David H. Petraeus and James F. Amos, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3–24 (Washington, DC: Combined Arms Center, 2006), http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/FM_3-24.pdf (accessed 6 October 2010); *Peace Operations*, Joint Publication 3–07.3 (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, 2007), <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3-07-3.pdf> (accessed 25 October 2010); William B. Caldwell, *Stability Operations*, FM 3–07 (Washington, DC: Combined Arms Center, 2008) <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/repository/FM307/FM3-07.pdf> (accessed 25 October 2010).
2. Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2001).
3. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold," *The New York Times*, 29 September 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/30/opinion/30kristof.html> (accessed 30 September 2010).