



5-2010

“The Problem from Hell”: Examining the Role of Peace and Conflict Studies for Genocide Intervention and Prevention

Paul Cormier
University of Manitoba, pncormier@hotmail.com

Peter Karari
University of Manitoba, karari_mp@yahoo.com

Alka Kumar
University of Manitoba, alkakr@yahoo.com

Robin Neustaeter
University of Manitoba, robin_neu@yahoo.ca

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs>



Part of the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cormier, Paul; Karari, Peter; Kumar, Alka; Neustaeter, Robin; Read, Jodi; and Senehi, Jessica (2010) "The Problem from Hell": Examining the Role of Peace and Conflict Studies for Genocide Intervention and Prevention," *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol. 17 : No. 1 , Article 2.

DOI: 10.46743/1082-7307/2010.1111

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol17/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Peace & Conflict Studies at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Peace and Conflict Studies by an authorized editor of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

“The Problem from Hell”: Examining the Role of Peace and Conflict Studies for Genocide Intervention and Prevention

Abstract

Genocide is one of the most challenging problems of our age. In her book, “A Problem from Hell:” America and the Age of Genocide, Samantha Power (2002) argues that the United States, while in a position to intervene in genocide, has lacked the will to do so, and therefore it is incumbent on the U.S. citizenry to pressure their government to act. This article reviews how the topic of genocide raises questions along the fault lines of the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). In this article, a framework is provided to examine genocide and responses to it. This includes a review of a multiplicity of factors that (a) facilitate genocide, (b) constrain action in the face of it, and (c) facilitate intervention. In this analysis, further consideration is given to the location of the actor either within the region of the conflict or external to it. Our goal is to situate the study of genocide in the PACS field and promote to the articulation of possibilities for intervention by individuals, organizations, and policymakers.

Keywords: *genocide, intervention, nonviolence, peace and conflict studies, United States*

Author Bio(s)

Paul Cormier is a member of Lake Helen First Nations Red Rock Indian Band in Northern Ontario, Canada. He is a member of the Wolf Clan and his traditional spirit name is Ma'iingan or Wolf in Ojibway. He has a Master's Degree in Conflict Analysis and Management. Currently, he is a doctoral student in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. His research interests are in Traditional Indigenous Peace-building, land disputes relating to Indigenous Peoples and identity-based conflicts, and Indigenous land rights, with the long-term objective of bringing peace to the Indigenous Peoples of the world by a reconnection to traditional lands. Email: pncormier@hotmail.com

Peter Karari is a doctoral student in Peace and Conflict Studies at the Mauro Centre, University of Manitoba. His doctorate research focuses on ethno-political violence and peace-building in Kenya. He has worked as a Programme Coordinator with Compassion International–Kenya and as the Chief Executive Officer with Oxfam GB–Kenya. He holds a B.A. in Social Work from the University of Nairobi in Kenya and an M.A. in Peace and Conflict Research from Otto-von Guericke University in Germany. Email: karari_mp@yahoo.com

Alka Kumar is an Associate Professor of English at University of Delhi, India. She now lives in Winnipeg and is currently a doctoral student in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. Her interests lie in the fields of development, religious conflict and human rights. Email: alkakr@yahoo.com

Robin Neustaeter is a peace activist, educator, and mother. She has been teaching courses and conducting workshops in the areas of education and conflict resolution for ten years. Currently, she is a doctoral student in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. Email: robin_neu@yahoo.ca

Jodi Read is a doctoral student in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. She was a designer of the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Immigration Listening Project, and facilitated focus groups in ten churches on the West Coast of the U.S. At Eastern Mennonite University, she conducted interviewed with documented and undocumented immigrant Mexican workers in the region. For seven years, she served with Mennonite Central Committee in Bolivia and Chile. She worked toward diverse project goals such as income generation, peace-building, and domestic violence. Email: read.jodi@gmail.com

Jessica Senehi is Assistant Professor in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba, and Associate Director of the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at St. Paul's College. At the

University of Manitoba, in 2007, she established the award-winning graduate-level Summer Institute for Peace and Renewing Community. In 2006, she established the Winnipeg International Storytelling Festival: Storytelling on the Path to Peace, presented by the Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice. Her research focuses on the role of storytelling in peacebuilding, cultural conflict, and gender. Email: Jessica_Senehi@umanitoba.ca

Authors

Paul Cormier, Peter Karari, Alka Kumar, Robin Neustaeter, Jodi Read, and Jessica Senehi

**“The Problem from Hell”:
Examining the Role of Peace and Conflict Studies
for Genocide Intervention and Prevention**

**Paul Cormier, Peter Karari, Alka Kumar,
Robin Neustaeter, Jodi Read, and Jessica Senehi**

Abstract

Genocide is one of the most challenging problems of our age. In her book, “A Problem from Hell:” America and the Age of Genocide, Samantha Power (2002) argues that the United States, while in a position to intervene in genocide, has lacked the will to do so, and therefore it is incumbent on the U.S. citizenry to pressure their government to act. This article reviews how the topic of genocide raises questions along the fault lines of the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). In this article, a framework is provided to examine genocide and responses to it. This includes a review of a multiplicity of factors that (a) facilitate genocide, (b) constrain action in the face of it, and (c) facilitate intervention. In this analysis, further consideration is given to the location of the actor either within the region of the conflict or external to it. Our goal is to situate the study of genocide in the PACS field and promote to the articulation of possibilities for intervention by individuals, organizations, and policymakers.

Introduction

The “crime without a name” —as Winston Churchill put it in an August 1941 BBC radio broadcast (cited by Power, 2002, p. 29)—was labelled “genocide” by Raphael Lemkin, and was adopted into international law in Geneva, in 1948. In her book, “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America and the Age of Genocide* (2002), Samantha Power discusses the brutal murder of millions of people in Armenia (1915–1917), Cambodia (1975–1979), Iraq (1988), Bosnia (1992–1993), Rwanda (1994), Srebrenica (1995), and Kosovo (1998–1999). Through detailed reporting based on documents and interviews, Power demystifies behind-the-scenes thoughts, decisions, and responses by individuals, leaders, and the U.S. government. Typically, a myriad of factors culminated in what Powers calls a lack of will to respond. Power also describes a different response—individuals who made a commitment to advocate for the rights of the vulnerable, the marginalized, the jeopardized, and the powerless. Power calls for an engaged citizenry to take an activist stance and hold their governments accountable, and demand effective and timely measures to stop genocide.

We found that the book resonated powerfully and fundamentally with our commitment to peace and social justice, and also raised questions along the fault lines of the Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) field: (a) Power focuses on decision-making to intervene militarily, and PACS examines effective nonviolent measures for achieving social justice. (b) These genocides are very direct and visible, but how do we name structural violence and indirect, invisible oppression—another face of genocide—within our own societies? (c) The language of human rights focuses on name-blame-and-shame

type approaches toward perpetrators of the crime of genocide whereas PACS methodologies emphasize mutual respect toward all parties and separating the people from the problem. And, finally, (d) in the face of the kind of brutality and victimization of whole groups of people that has occurred in the past centuries and continues to take place, how can we maintain the hope, optimism, and belief in human agency that is such a part of the PACS field, and is it realistic to do so?

We address these questions in the theoretical background of this paper. A general conclusion is that by fracturing the problem, we can perhaps find footholds and handholds for scaling this precipice. We do this in two ways: First, we address in turn, the factors that (a) facilitate genocide itself, (b) facilitate responses characterized by inaction, and (c) facilitate responses characterized by effective intervention and prevention. We further develop this analysis with a consideration of the intervener’s location either within the region of conflict or external to it. This analysis is a beginning sketch, and should be further developed and tested. This is significant for facing up to some of the cloudier areas in our field, and critically interrogating what this field can offer in situations that manifest extreme conflict and violence.

Dilemmas for the Field

Again, examining genocide in terms of our field and our reading of Power’s book raised some dilemmas for the PACS field—especially in the North American construction of the field—that are typically avoided. Here, we raise these issues and

discuss them briefly, but each one is worthy of a full-length article in itself. Further, we review some of the theoretical perspectives from PACS to the examination of this topic.

Commitment to Nonviolence

As A. J. Muste was famously quoted in the *New York Times* in 1967, “there is no way to peace, peace is the way”—that is, process and outcome are inextricable (Lederach, 1995). At the heart of the PACS field is a commitment to nonviolence: its moral authority (King, 1999), its transformative potential (Gandhi, 1962), and its strategic possibilities (Sharp, 2005). While Power exposes how genocide is a tool of political manoeuvring that hinders an effective response to people’s suffering and how genocide often occurs under the cover of war, she consistently affirms military or armed intervention to stop genocide. A concern is that the use of violence to stop violence increases harm to people, does not get to the root of the issues, and locates power in weapons rather than people.

In the PACS field, this gap between nonviolence and military intervention is rarely, if at all, bridged, nor discussed in length. Nonviolence typically encompasses the issues of war resistance, peace activism, and conscientious objection, as well as compelling critiques of militarization (for example, Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001). While, recently, critiques of war are often accompanied by affirmation of the commitment and sacrifice of service men and women, in North America, there is an emotional history to this issue as well that has not been fully or publicly aired. For example, U.S. soldiers, often traumatized, returning from the U.S.-Vietnam war were

“The Problem from Hell”

called “baby killers.” And young war resisters were labeled as “unpatriotic,” “disloyal,” “cowardly,” and often left their life in the U.S. behind to settle in Canada or abroad.

A fuller discussion and examination of these issues is important for the PACS field. Meanwhile, Powers offers many nonviolent approaches for the populace and government to consider. The analysis below only includes nonviolent interventions. There is a breadth of nonviolent interventions that can take place that may eliminate or mitigate the need for military intervention. It has often been observed that many important nonviolent responses to the Holocaust were not taken, for example, the admission of more Jewish refugees to Canada and the United States, or the acceptance, in 1939, rather than the turning away of the passenger ship *The St. Louis*, which carried 900 German Jewish refugees (Morse, 1968).

North American Genocide and Structural Violence

Another concern is how do we distinguish between the direct violence of genocidal wars of the past century with the settlement of Canada by colonial powers and the current violence many Aboriginal people face in North America. For example, colonial laws like the Indian Act in Canada were designed to destroy a racial group. Masked as assimilation and presented as the “glorious settlement” of Canada, the well-documented results have been: the Indigenous population disenfranchised from their homes, forced from their lands, children taken from their families and placed with non-Aboriginal people, entire populations wiped out, forced marches/relocations, a legacy of abuse from residential schools, and documented forced infection with deadly disease (for example, Churchill, 1997). Even as people stood in disbelief as acts of genocide unfolded

“The Problem from Hell”

before their eyes around the world, aboriginal people in North America fought for, and continue to fight for their existence.

Using the word genocide to describe Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal relations in Canada and the United States can be unsettling. This is a difficult conversation that even the tireless activist Raphael Lemkin avoided (Power, 2002). However, the damage of an unacknowledged loss—what Kenneth Hardy (2005) calls a “dehumanized loss”—leads to rage, sadness, sorrow, and despair that leads to violence toward self and others. Such denial blocks, impedes, and constrains potential resolution, restitution, and restoration of dignity, respect, value, community, and health.

Therefore, it is our responsibility, in fact an immense weight, to address these issues. Perhaps a detailed and rich analysis of how to understand the intervention of genocide can lead to a cultural mind shift—even a global civic culture of peace as Boulding (1988) envisioned—and can help promote the capacity for both recognizing and changing destructive and dehumanizing power relations, structural inequalities, social and cultural devaluation, and ethnocide even when it is in our own society. Because it is typically harder and more risky to raise local human rights issues, perhaps considering the factor of location (within the conflict region or external to it) is an important consideration in identifying options and strategies of response.

“Name-Shame-Blame” versus “Win-Win” approaches

In the PACS field, there is recognition that conflict is a part of social life and can be handled constructively whereas violence is seen as something to be avoided. Typically, in the field of conflict resolution, identity-based conflict is addressed by

“The Problem from Hell”

creating a space of equal safety and neutrality (for example, Rothman, 1997). This is required to keep the trust of the parties. When does that effort at balance belie justice or serve the purposes of the identity-group in power at the expense of the less powerful group? How, and at what point, do we address issues of power? Is “name-blame-and-shame” an alternative tool of conflict resolution or antithetical to conflict resolution approaches? Advocacy for justice and a balance of power has always been part of the peace and conflict studies field (for example, see Laue, 1982), but how does that fit in with the majority of work that emphasizes a “win-win” approach?

While the dilemma of whether peace serves the interests of or undermines justice is fairly well known (Lederach, 1995, 1997) and while the PACS field has always had social justice as a central aim, it is important to remember how subtle and enervating this dilemma might be. How does practice for peace and conflict resolution change, or need to change, when power differentials are steep and violence is happening? In the context of violent conflict, those who attempt to build peace or reach out to the “enemy” may be seen as sentimental at best or dangerously naive at worst.

It is not always clear when escalating layers of conflict gradually escalate to genocidal violence. Genocide is often perpetrated in the name of one identity group against a minority group, and not everyone in the dominant group can necessarily be seen as a perpetrator. Within the “bystander” populace, individuals and networks have worked in various ways to resist, sabotage, or overturn genocidal processes in their societies. Within the targeted group, there are varying ideas, strategies, and choices about how to resist. The identification of numerous means and points of intervention in intergroup and identity-based conflicts allows choices and creates possibilities for intervention of

intergroup divisions, hatred, and tolerance that helps individuals, groups, and policymakers position themselves to be of influence.

Despair Versus Agency

A significant insight that comes from both reading about genocide and Power’s analysis is the incredible sense of loss that genocide generates. Even the secondary trauma from reading about genocide or working with victims may be overwhelming. Direct trauma affects millions of survivors, including the many refugees who have settled in North America from other parts of the world. Most people in North America have been affected by genocide, political violence, or war—if not in their generation then in their parents’ or grandparents’ family. For this reason as well, studying genocide may trigger deep feelings of personal loss or loss of community. Power (2002) quotes the words of observers: “infuriating,” “maddening” (Henry Morgenthau Sr., p. 7), “frustrated” (an Associated Press correspondent, p. 10), “angrier” (Theodore Roosevelt, p. 11), “appalled,” “livid,” (Lemkin, p. 19), “grief-stricken” (Szmul Zygielbojm, p. 31, committed suicide), “pain and anguish” (Arthur Goldberg, U.S. intelligence, p. 36), “obviously a man in pain” (lawyer’s description of Raphael Lemkin, p. 49).

Stepping into this emotional terrain is risky. How do we keep ourselves safe, resilient, and effective as peace workers in the face of even vicarious trauma? It is difficult to raise these issues because they can be so disturbing and because we may become agents of vicarious trauma when we discuss them. Discussing these issues may be re-traumatizing for those who are affected by these issues, and, at the least, we need to consider how to respond to profound emotions that emerge when these issues are

“The Problem from Hell”

discussed. Clearly, peace and human rights education is important, but what information at what age is appropriate to share? How do we process our own feelings around these issues so that our own buttons do not get triggered in our work? For the peacemaker whose work is based on the belief that it is possible for people to create peace, such a sense of loss could potentially lead to despair and burn-out.

At the same time, we can see where people have acted successfully to find inspiration, courage, and hope. One of the most moving aspects of Power’s work is the focus on personal narratives that bear testimony to the faith, courage, and perseverance of individuals to act for the collective good even in the face of state power, and speak to human agency and possibility—often relying on naming the problem. Raphael Lemkin devoted his life to the scholarly articulation and international legislation of genocide. U.S. Senator William Proxmire was a leader in persuading the U.S. Senate to ratify the Convention and for 19 years, beginning in 1967, he gave more than 3,211 speeches on this topic, no two the same. Canadian Major General Romeo Dallaire, whose appeals to the U.N. for reinforcements in Rwanda were unheeded, became a spokesperson who spoke and wrote about his painful experience in order that people become more aware of the pain of genocide and the responsibility to protect. In 1998, African American prosecutor Pierre Prosper argued in the first case before an international criminal tribunal, that in the context of Rwanda, sexual violence against women carried intent of genocide, that is, to “destroy the very foundation of a group” (p. 485). Fragmenting this monolithic problem into smaller components—for example, recognizing the things that have been accomplished—creates more possibilities to see how action, including our own, can be effective.

Framework

Theorists have often preferred “elegant” theories and “Occam’s razor” where the simplest and most obvious explanations are the most likely to be true. But in the complex network of social problems, a multiplicity of factors interconnect in complex, and, often, unpredictable ways. This complexity makes social problems harder to understand and resistant to change as systems have a way of absorbing shock and returning to a kind of homeostasis. This complexity also opens up possibilities for myriad points of entry and myriad roles for interveners as agents of problem-solving, healing, and change.

Ultimately, resolution of broad social conflicts and social problems requires social movement and social change, which can be seen as a long-term process of social healing. Perhaps all interventions make an impact though they are hard to see when looking at the big picture—until eventually a tipping point is reached, and the momentum for change becomes more powerful than the pull of history.

PACS approaches embrace conflicts’ complexity, and provide a consideration of many factors. The intensity and development stage of a conflict impacts how it is approached (Byrne and Keashly, 2000). External guarantors, allies, and other external parties can have a critical role in the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts and political violence (Byrne, 2007). There are different types of mediators who bring varying degrees of power to leverage sources or credibility, for example, high-profile “primary mediators,” such as U.S. Presidents, and low-profile, “secondary mediators,” such as religiously-based mediators, often Quakers or Mennonites (Princen, 1992). Conflicts are

“The Problem from Hell”

understood to be driven by a complexity of material as well as intangible interests (Ross 1993, 2009). Further, a multitude of social dimensions can drive conflict: demographic, economic, political, historical, linguistic, and psychocultural. Conflicts further play themselves out and are driven by dynamics at multiple levels of analysis: for example, elites, middle-tier elites, and the grassroots (Lederach, 1997). That is, the personal is political (Millet, 1970) and global dynamics affect domestic relations (Tifft and Markham, 1991). This also means that conflict resolution can take place at these different levels and everyone can and should be involved. Age is a consideration, and while high proportions of youth in a society can be associated with revolution, young people can also be peacemakers and drive positive social change (McEvoy-Levy, 2006). Conflict mitigation can and should occur in different social arenas, or tracks, including government; professional conflict resolution; business; private citizens; research, training, and education; religious approaches; funding; and public opinion and communication (Diamond and McDonald, 1996).

Taking into account conflict complexity, this analysis sketches a framework that examines the situational, interest-based, ideological, and emotional factors that (a) shape human action to initiate and escalate genocide, (b) inhibit, constrain, or deter human action to intervene in genocide, and (c) promote human action to not engage in or to intervene against genocide. The notion that there are situational, interest-based, ideological, or emotional factors is an analytical categorization only as these types of factors influence each other in complex and significant ways. The term “ideological” is used to refer to cognitive factors, keeping in mind that knowledge is socially constructed. In any particular case, not all of these factors may be in play, and not all those factors in

play are equally salient. The goal of this analysis is to identify as many factors as possible in order to clarify different avenues for intervention and thereby to promote the agency of individuals, groups, and policymakers at various stages of violence escalation and de-escalation: early, intervention, post-genocide work, and prevention of future genocides.

Escalation of Genocide

Within the Conflict Zone

Situational. Situational factors that might facilitate genocide include autocratic political systems, economic conditions, as well as a prostrate populace (for example, Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009). War itself can serve as a cover for genocide. Law can serve the interests of genocide. For example, numerous laws were developed by the Nazi regime to control and segregate Jews during the Holocaust. By legal act, governments have restricted, relocated, and defined the identity of indigenous peoples (for example, Churchill, 1997). Momentum towards genocide builds with the escalation of dehumanizing practices: for example, in Armenia: disarmament of the population, the rounding up and killing of 250 intellectuals, Turkish notables killed in every province, Armenian workers no longer used, churches desecrated, schools closed, teachers who refused to convert were killed, deportation of civilians to Syria, lack of facilities contributing to death, and property seized (for example, Power, 2002). Genocide is progressive violence.

“The Problem from Hell”

Interests. The political and economic interests of the perpetrators may drive the genocide of a group. Removing populations may be driven by elites’ greed, mistrust, and expansionism, and be a strategy for securing power and ownership of a territory. The victims of genocide are seen as obstacles to the agenda of the perpetrators.

Ideology. Nationalism at the exclusion of minority groups may fuel genocidal violence characterized as “ethnic cleansing.” While history may be situational, interpretations and the use of history may be manipulated to motivate genocide. Folklore and cultural narratives may demonize minority groups (for example, Snyder, 1978). Propaganda and media may justify or mask what is happening within a country. For four years leading up to the Serbian Army’s invasion of Bosnia, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic waged a disinformation campaign, including staged films of Bosnian men raping Serbian women, to infuriate Serbian soldiers against Bosnian Muslims (Hedges, 2003).

Emotional. Ethnic hatred, and a destructive re-channeling of a society’s fears, humiliation, unresolved shame, and sense of devaluation can fuel the intense emotions required for genocide. Love of country and countrymen can be manipulated with propaganda that inflames these negative emotions. During the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, in the early 1990s, Serbian President Slobodan Milosovic and Bosnian leader Radovan Karadzic used the historic Battle of Kosovo and the death of Prince Lazar in the 14th century, among other propaganda, to rally Serbs to the process of so-called “ethnic cleansing” of Muslims in Bosnia to the point of crating a sense of “time collapse” (Volkan, 1997). Fear of being seen as an outsider may motivate people to be active perpetrators to prove their loyalty in order to save themselves (for example, Gross. 2001).

External to the Conflict Zone

Situational. External states may have historical ties to regional parties and act as their “external ethno-guarantors” (Byrne, 2007). Many observers feared that the regional wars that were the break-up of the former Yugoslavia could lead to a devastating global war if Russia became involved to support the Serbs, Turkey became involved to support the Bosnian Muslims, and Germany or Western Europe came to the aid of the Croats.

Interests. Greed and economic desire may motivate other state actors in the global community to provide weapons (Pearson and Sislin, 2001). For example, Germany provided the chemicals that were used by Saddam Hussein against the Kurds. Small states such as land-locked Switzerland are vulnerable and may claim neutrality. In World War II, by providing a banking centre to Nazi Germany, Switzerland may arguably have facilitated genocide while creating a disincentive for the Allies to bomb or invade their nation.

Ideology. Belief in the balance of power may motivate external actors to support a country that is perpetrating genocide in order not to disrupt what is seen as a global balance of power. For example, Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge in Cambodia received the tacit support of China and the USSR. In Rwanda, radio had a critical role in the planned genocide in Rwanda when Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines (RTL) disseminated propaganda portraying Tutsis as “cockroaches,” a threat, and outsiders along with popular music and scripted programming that was purported to be the real conversations of Rwandans (Strobel, 1997).

Emotional. Emotions of ethnic hatred or devaluation as well as indifference to human suffering may deter intervention.

Lack of Intervention against Genocide

Within the Conflict Zone

This section refers to constraints to intervention of both victims and those not directly targeted in the conflict zone. It may not always be clear who is in which group, and both groups make choices at early stages in the escalation to genocide regarding their responses to the situation.

Situation. The reality of power makes action difficult. Ineffective human rights laws fail to protect people. Separation, segregation, control of movement, and control of means of communication seriously constrain or prevent people’s ability to gather, strategize, or even understand what is going on.

Interests. Those who may not have directly instigated genocide may still be willing to benefit economically, socially, or politically as a result of it. People at the grassroots level may seize the opportunity of genocide to increase their possessions. In the Polish town of Jedwabne where 1,600 Jews were murdered by their neighbors, some of the worst perpetrators seized the property of the victims for themselves (Gross, 2001). During the Rwandan genocide, hungry landless impoverished young people seized the opportunity of the chaos to kill land-owning men, usually older than 50, and seize their farms (Diamond, 2005).

Ideology. Media and propaganda may convince those not targeted that nothing is wrong. There may be a belief that the victims have brought the situation on themselves, and it is the responsibility of the victims to correct the situation. Victims and those not directly targeted may believe there is nothing they can do. When Lemkin tried to bring his family to the United States in advance of the Holocaust, they were complacent and felt the escalating violence was simply the price of martyrdom and their fate (Power 2002). A sense of defeatism pervades the situation.

Emotions. Both victims and those not directly targeted may feel paralyzing and realistic fear in the face of the violence (Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009). Those who are not targeted may harbour ethnic hatreds themselves, be indifferent to the pain of others, or experience passivity.

External to the Conflict Zone

Situation. Problems of such magnitude and complexity are really quite challenging. Outside governments weigh the financial and human costs of intervention. The outcome of intervention is unpredictable and raises concerns about unintended consequences.

Interests. For governments, intervention may entail political, security, and economic risks, and can seriously jeopardize strategic economic interests. Even intervention such as economic sanctions might be resisted if it affects business sectors in the sanctioning country. When arguing for the passage of the U.N. Convention on Genocide, Sen. Proxmire argued that lawmakers were more responsive to constituent pressure and profit than human dignity as there were more than a hundred treaties and

“The Problem from Hell”

conventions on economic issues such as the Tuna Convention with Costa Rica, a Halibut Convention with Canada, and a Road Traffic Convention allowing licensed American drivers to drive on European highways, among others (Power, 2002).

Ideology. The notion of “gentleman’s bias” (Power, p. 260) demands that ambassador’s refrain from critiquing or undermining the governments where they are stationed. There may be a lack of knowledge or agreement about what to do, and a sense of futility and defeatism. Or, there may be serious concerns about the financial, time, and human cost of intervention, as well as unintended consequences of such intervention.

Often outsiders do not believe stories about the escalating atrocities when they hear them. They dismiss reports as “propaganda,” “exaggerated,” “hoaxes,” “unbelievable,” “unsupported with evidence” (Power, pp. 8–9). Outsiders may be relatively complacent about the violence because they believe that there are atrocities on both sides, and that brutality is part of war. Devaluation or dehumanization of the victim leads to inaction and may be combined with a sense that the region of conflict is characterized by primitiveness and tribalism and has a natural propensity for violence (Wolff, 2006). Outsiders may believe that it is happening on both sides and not recognize the acts of murder that are taking place. Disbelief in the possibility for evil actions and that things could get so much worse than they are at a given point inhibits intervention. There may be a sense that the problem belongs to the victim and there is no responsibility to protect or intervene. In general, while knowledge of the violence might be getting out to government, the general public may be largely ignorant of what is going on, or not understand it. Denial of the problem may set in as a defense mechanism.

The media may play a critical role in how conflict and intervention is understood by the public (Strobel, 1997). In the current age of Google, Yahoo, Twitter, CNN, and 24/7 news feeds, the public is constantly exposed to information on both extraordinary and frivolous world events. Everyone becomes a spectator to everything that is going on in the world. How do persons interpret, respond to, or make sense of issues that are happening across the world or next door? The amount of information can overwhelm one’s ability to process and understand, to make sense of, and to act on this information.

Emotions. Thinly masked ethnic hatred, prejudice, or devaluation of the other may contribute to inaction. Outsiders who fail to act may be accused of indifference to pain. Counter-intuitively, increased news coverage and awareness of a multiplicity of horrific social issues throughout the world can engender issue fatigue, even hopelessness and despair, or the desire for isolationism.

Genocide Intervention

Within the Conflict Zone

This section refers to those factors which facilitate genocide prevention and intervention by both victims and those not directly targeted in the conflict zone.

Situation. A vibrant civil society and thriving business sector and economy make a society resilient to genocide (van Tongeren and others, 2005). Good leaders are able to work constructively for peace. Getting people together to discuss issues and create networks and crosscutting ties provide communication links. Effective and enforceable laws are a deterrent to political misconduct, corruption, and abuse.

“The Problem from Hell”

Interests. Thriving trade and interdependent economic and social relations may provide a disincentive for war. Business is an important track of diplomacy and aspect of civil society (Diamond and McDonald, 1997).

Ideology. Nonviolent protest challenges prevailing ideas about violence and initiates, sustains, and gives form to a social process of making meaning. To be in a position to influence, it is important to demonstrate the case for, and to educate for, peace and tolerance. It is important to get out the story of what is happening and the atrocities that are occurring, and to name what is happening. The media has a role in getting this information to the public. For oppressed groups, the homeplace can be a site of resistance where grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers, fathers, aunts, and uncles provide socialization that maintains a group’s culture, identity, and history, often encoded in folklore; strategies for survival; as well as comfort and re-humanization (Hooks, 1990).

Emotions. Impatience with the status quo drives people to resist and take action. Sometimes people call up the strength to resist when there is no way. Power describes a busload of Kurdish men who resisted after lengthy rides in inhumane conditions to their would-be mass graves in Iraq. In the tumult that arose as a result, only one man, Ozer, was able to survive undetected under a mound of bodies when they were shot in retribution, and eventually crawl out and find refuge. Ozer’s story and what happened to all of those men is now told in Power’s book. During the genocide in Rwanda, when the girls from a Catholic school were taken to a field, and shot, one girl was able to persuade one of the men to save her, and was a sole survivor (Kayitesi, 2008).

External to the Conflict Zones

“The Problem from Hell”

Situation. Power (2002) refers to the International Criminal Court as “a giant without arms” (p. 491). Restructuring and empowering the U.N. is a possibility that needs to be seriously investigated. Early warning systems can facilitate international mediation before conflict escalates further. Power emphasizes that many perpetrators weigh daily how far they can go, and therefore it is essential for the U.S. and others states to immediately and forcefully condemn racially-based violence when it erupts. Naming and condemning the reprehensible action and the individuals responsible for it are important steps. Getting experts together—including academics from the PACS field—for consultations during a crisis is critical.

Interests. It is important to name the interests in the region, and to seek clarification of U.S. national interests in particular nations. Public dialogue can be a process of interrogating, lobbying, and reshaping arguments to clarify how stopping genocide is a U.S. interest.

Ideology. Lobbying and advocacy is perhaps one of the most important interventions. Education can promote widespread understanding of genocide and ways to address it. Peace education can build a culture of human rights that is resilient to genocide and prepared to respond. Education about current affairs can also provide early warning and alert governments and people to what may need to be addressed. Stories about current and past genocides need to be told. Credible sources and eyewitnesses who report atrocities are important for building awareness and compassion. When journalists or government officials are dispersed or murdered, civilians fleeing the massacres tell their stories. They must be heard. Again, the media has a role in this. Nonviolent action and protest is part of a public discourse that can affect policy, raise consciousness of the

“The Problem from Hell”

issues and build solidarity at local and international levels. Constructive narratives can chart pathways to peace. The decision to make the prevention of genocide a priority can build the momentum for change; this requires international condemnation when massacres, political violence, and genocide occur. It is important for outsiders to listen for what victims and those attempting to intervene on the ground are requesting when making policy decisions.

Emotions. A broader conception of sacrifice may be needed to address global problems, and global inequality that fuels political greed and violence. It is painful to absorb survivors’ stories of horror, and there must be the capacity to believe the unbelievable. We must also recognize the emotions of the perpetrator and not always expect rational actors. Impatience and courage are critical for working for social justice and peace.

Figure 1.
Factors that Contribute to Genocide, Lack of Intervention, and Intervention

INTERVENOR POSITION	TYPE OF FACTOR	Escalation of Genocide	Lack of Intervention	Intervention
Within the Conflict Zone	SITUATIONAL	Autocratic political systems Poor economic conditions Prostrate populace • War as a cover • Laws legitimating violence • Escalating dehumanization	Ineffective human rights laws • Separation Segregation • Control of movement and control of communication hamper resistance	Vibrant civil society and economy • Leaders build peace and share power Effective and enforceable laws
	INTEREST-BASED	Political and economic interests • Greed • Security Expansionism	Potential interveners exploit perceived economic, social, and political benefits of genocide rather than intervene	Thriving democracy, trade, and business that promote diplomacy and civil society
	IDEOLOGICAL	Folklore, cultural narratives, and interpretations of history that justify genocide	Media and propaganda mask and hide the facts of genocide, or justify it Belief that the victims brought it on themselves	Culture of nonviolence, peace, and tolerance Humanization
	EMOTIONAL	Ethnic hatred • Fear Humiliation • Unresolved shame • Propaganda that inflames these emotions toward to the Other	Paralyzing fear • Ethnic hatred • Indifference Acceptance and resignation	Compassion • Resistance Courage • Impatience with the status quo
External to the Conflict Zone	SITUATIONAL	Historical ties to regional parties based on ethno-alliances	Actual magnitude and complexity of the problem Unknowable direct and indirect financial and human risks and costs	Strong and enforceable international law • Early warning systems • Practices in place related to the responsibility to protect
	INTEREST-BASED	Greed and economic interests • Larger political interests, e.g., the global balance of power	Political, security, and economic risks	Clarification of how stopping genocide serves interests
	IDEOLOGICAL	Belief in maintaining the strategic global balance of power, and desire to maintain it despite actions of allies	The notion of “gentleman’s diplomacy” • Magnitude and potential for evil is unbelievable • Atrocities believed to be both sides Idea problem is the victims’ Disbelief • Unawareness	Education • Lobbying Activism • Peace education Human rights education Current affairs education Vibrant public discourse Peace journalism and constructive media
	EMOTIONAL	Indifference • Othering Ethnic hatred	Indifference • Overwhelmed by horror • Prejudice and Othering • Issue fatigue Hopelessness and despair	Build capacity to the believe the unbelievable • Impatience • Courage

Conclusion

The study of genocide must be central to the PACS field. Alternatives to violence have defined the PACS field, and more work needs to be done to examine and evaluate nonviolent alternatives to genocide by different types of actors and at every stage of the escalating violence, the de-escalation of violence and so called “post-conflict” phases, as well as prevention. Social justice and civil rights have been central to the development of the field, and this work also needs to be further developed in order to address the many faces of genocide, including the forms of the cultural devaluation and murder that harms and devastates whole groups of peoples, including indigenous peoples throughout the world, violence against women (femicide), violence against children (infanticide), and all people who face extraordinary material deprivation (modern slavery, extreme poverty). While anger, rage, and hatred might be an understandable and normal response to genocide and violence—what Kenneth Hardy (2005) calls de-humanized loss—it remains critical to explore a breadth of strategies and possibilities to re-channel this anger, make sense of the past, and use past experience to create better societies.

The PACS field is distinguished by its commitment both to theory and practice, and to their interconnection. Praxis, as Paulo Friere (1970) put it, is “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p 75). It is not enough to critically analyze, but to also chart paths and break paths toward peace. This analysis seeks to provide a framework that might promote action and de-facilitate the bystander position by providing insight and options. An important variable is location relative to the conflict and violence.

“The Problem from Hell”

There is also a group of people that move between the conflict zone and locations distant to it. These are often diplomats (such as Hans Morgenthau in Armenia); journalists (such as Samantha Power herself); military personnel (such as Romeo Dallaire in Rwanda); refugee survivors; and scholars who through research, or because they are from a conflict zone, travel internationally. Raphael Lemkin was such a scholar. He was also a refugee. While growing up in the Bialystock region of Poland, during the World War I period, when Germany and Russia were battling in Poland, his family fled their farm to hide in the neighbouring forests. In September 1939, six days after the Wehrmacht’s invasion of Poland, he fled, at first on foot, and eventually made his way to the U.S. where, with the help of a professor for whom he had translated the Polish criminal code, he obtained a position at Duke University. Such cultural go-betweens are in a unique, if often bedevilled position, as mediators between knowledge systems, who may be able to be effective advocates for victims of political violence and genocide.

While people far from the violence might easily not act nor intervene for numerous reasons, including lack of awareness, as outsiders they may also have more security and capacity to speak out, bring resources, and provide refuge during crises. The great thinkers and peacemakers who, over the past five decades, have inspired the field of peace and conflict studies, have been leaders in addressing power relations, social injustice, and violence. But there is much more work that needs to be done, and, as Power argues, it means involving civil society. This includes finding inspiration—sometimes even in the forms of songs and stories—to sustain us on the journey, which is really the journey of humanity, to a world with peace and justice for everybody.

References

- Boulding, E. *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988.
- Byrne, S. “Mired in Intractability: The Roles of External Ethno-guarantors and Primary Mediators in Cyprus and Northern Ireland.” *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 2007, 24 (2), 149–72.
- Byrne, S., and Carter, N. “Social Cubism: Six Social Forces of Ethno-territorial Conflict in Northern Ireland and Quebec.” *Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 1996, 3 (2), 52–71.
- Byrne, S., and Keashly, L. “Working with Ethno-Political Conflict: A Multi-Modal and Multi-Level Approach to Conflict Intervention.” *International Peacekeeping*, 2000, 7 (2), 97–120.
- Churchill, W. *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1942–present*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Book, 1997.
- Diamond, J. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York: Penguin, 2005.
- Diamond, L., and McDonald, J. W. *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 1996.
- Enloe, C. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Gandhi, M. In Louis Fischer (ed.), *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology*. New York: Random House, 1962.

“The Problem from Hell”

Goldstein, J. S. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa.*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Gross, J. T. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland.*

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Hardy, K., and Laszloffy, T. *Teens Who Hurt, Clinical Interventions to Break the Cycle of Violence.* New York: Guilford Press, 2005.

Hedges, C. *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning.* New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

hooks, b. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics.* Boston: South End Press, 1990.

Kayitesi, B. Public Lecture, Winnipeg International Storytelling Festival, Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 9, 2008.

King, M. L., Jr. In J. M. Washington (ed.), *I have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World.* San Francisco: Harper, 1992.

Laue, J. “Ethical Considerations in Choosing Intervention Roles,” *Peace and Change*, 1982, 8 (2/3), 29–42.

Lederach, J. P. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995.

Lederach, J.P. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.*

Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997.

Mac Ginty, R. and Williams, A. *Conflict and Development.* London: Routledge, 2009.

McEvoy-Levy, S. (ed.). *Troublemakers or Peacemakers? Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.

Millet, K. *Sexual Politics.* New York: Doubleday, 1970.

“The Problem from Hell”

- Morse, A. *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy*. New York: Random House, 1968.
- Pearson, F. S., and Sislin, J. *Arms and Ethnic Conflict*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.
- Power, S. *“A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Perennial, 2003.
- Princen, T. *Intermediaries in International Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Ross, M. H. (ed.). *Culture and Belonging in Divided Societies: Contestation and Symbolic Landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Ross, M. H. *The Management of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Rothman, J. *Resolving Identity-Based Conflicts in Nations, Organizations, and Communities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979.
- Sharp, G. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*. Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 2005.
- Strobel, W. P. *Late-breaking Foreign Policy: The New Media’s Influence on Peace Operations*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997.
- Snyder, L. *Roots of German Nationalism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978
- Tiftt, L., and Markham, L. “Battering Women and Battering Central Americans.” In Pepinsky, H., and Quinney, R. (eds.), *Criminology as Peacemaking*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991.

“The Problem from Hell”

van Tongeren, P., Brenk, M., Hallema, M., and Verhoeven, J. (eds.) *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005.

Volkan, V. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Hatred*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1997.

Wolff, S. *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.